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Articles

- 400 KENNETH J. ROBINSON
*Unpopular Causes : In Defence of
Vulgarity*
- 403 E. S. TURNER
*It's Less of a Strain to Travel by
Drain*
- 405 R. G. G. PRICE
Gilding the Geese
- 407 HUGH GUNNING
Was Bannockburn Really Necessary?
- 415 D. D. PORTER
Something of a Borzoi
- 423 CHARLES REID
Musicians from Russia
- 424 PATRICK RYAN
The Man Next Door

Verse

- 406 PENELOPE HUNT
Age Group
- 408 ROBIN MOUNT
Father O'Reilly
- 420 VIRGINIA GRAHAM
The Viennese Shampoo

Features

- 409 THE FUTURE OF RAILWAYS
- 427 IN THE CITY
Lombard Lane
- 427 IN THE COUNTRY
Ronald Duncan
- 434 FOR WOMEN
- 436 TOBY COMPETITIONS

Criticism

- 428 FILMS (Richard Mallett)
- 429 THEATRE (Eric Keown)
- 430 JAZZ (Patrick Skene Catling)
- 430 RADIO (Patrick Ryan)
- 431 BOOKING OFFICE
Richard Price : To Be an Englishman

Subscriptions

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*For overseas rates see page 436

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The London Charivari

A U.N. spokesman in the Congo spoke of negotiators armed with helicopters, radio cars and "all the necessary modern truce equipment." Time was when you could end a war with one ink-horn, but now truce-making, like so much else, suffers from over-organization. No doubt there is a U.N. store labelled "Truce Equipment: Keep Out," with a counter over which a hard-bitten quartermaster type issues white flags, microphones, duplicators, dictionaries, arc-lights, tranquillizers, lie-detectors and notices reading "Have You Forgotten Anything?" Think how much equipment must have been used up by that perpetual truce at Panmunjom.

She Who Must Be Obeyed

THERE is more than ephemeral curiosity-value in the story of the charwoman who, confronted with an intruder on the stairs of the flat she was cleaning, brushed him away with her mop, remarking "That's quite enough of that," and leaving him later to go berserk and require three burly policemen to restrain him. The compulsive power of a determined woman over

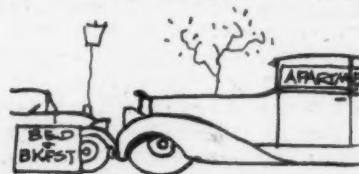


superior male brute force is an old mystery—Delilah over Samson, Ayesha over all those primitive coloured people,

and Florence Nightingale over the War Office are random examples. It may be the way they look; this theme was decorated by Tenniel in *Punch* a hundred years ago with a drawing of a masterful wife captioned by one of the most outrageous puns of the century: "An eye like Ma's to threaten and command."

Asleep By the Deep

I WAS glad to learn that Brighton is considering installing toilet facilities and other amenities for the comfort of people who for one reason or another elect to sleep there overnight in their cars. Perhaps other resorts whose daytime attractions bring in more people



than can be accommodated in bedrooms will follow Brighton's example. The establishment of a number of roadside dormitories of this sort would provide an honourable function for all the cars ten years old and older that fail their mechanical tests.

Coming Events

AS Herb Elliott slanted through the rain at the White City last week and moved damply into the lead I was surprised to hear a heavily moustachioed gent at my left ear roaring not "Come on Australia!" or "Come on the Commonwealth!" but "Cambridge!



"China's on the move, Russia's on the move, Africa's on the move. Why isn't Britain?"

Cambridge! Cambridge!" I waited for a following cry of "Feet! Feet!" but none came. It was quite unnecessary. Elliott, by the way, goes up to Cambridge next month.

Power of the Press

IN a thoughtful leader the *Daily Express* points out that the success of the Picasso exhibition is due to the Press. It seems it is not the arty wastrels of the Arts Council, with their lavish outpouring of public money, or even the painter himself, who have created this apparent rise in cultural interest. It is the newspapers, with their reports of how great the interest is. So much, no doubt, for the inherent interest of that art collection in New Brunswick.

Loose Ties with Mr. Amies

IT was a good idea of Mr. Hardy Amies to launch his new "winter collection" of men's ties by asking us to tea and regaling us with a brains-trust discussion carried on by three managing editors (*The Queen*, *Man About Town* and *The Tailor and Cutter*), the proprietor of a Chelsea boutique and a professor of fashion design. But it must have come as a blow, and it was certainly unjust to his beautiful, if expensive, creations when the one outstanding idea to come out of their

deliberations was that the tie was an anachronism and was definitely on its way out.

It Makes a Change

A BRITISH business man interviewed on the Continent is reported to have told a newspaperman: "I am a crook. A big crook. I wish all my creditors the best of luck. They will never see a farthing of their money." This is what one always hopes someone will say, instead of "I have an answer for everything," or "I have been over-working recently." I suppose it's bound to be denied, but it brightened an otherwise dull breakfast.

Romance Brings Up the 9.15

BRIGHTON Entertainments Committee may have a lesson to teach to British Railways. Spurning a plan to replace their old seafront toy trains by streamlined coaches they point out that in this age of speed "unhurried pace, rolling stock of antique appearance and Spartan comfort" provide a unique attraction. If only B.R. could lay on dirtier carriages, darker platforms and fewer porters they might fire travellers' imagination with a combined vision of *Outward Bound* adventure and Christmas card stage-coach olde-worldliness. A few out-of-work actors playing Turpin on the York run could mean



"While other nations bend their technical resources to putting a man into space..."

"The Day of the Migwitch Crackens"

ALEX ATKINSON
takes the lid off Science Fiction
next week

"Your money and your life" to the poor old deficit-haunted Commissioners.

Not that Bit, Sir!

THE Medical Defence Union is getting worried about the increasing number of operations on the wrong digit or limb. I am hardened to the idea that sometimes the cure is fitted to the wrong disease; but it came as a shock to hear that in at least nine cases recently surgeons somehow got shunted on to the wrong target. The M.D.U. suggests a clearer code, thumb, first finger, etc., so that the surgeon counts along to the right place. But surely labelling would be the thing; the patient would arrive on the table neatly stencilled "Open here."

Si Monumentum Requiritur . . .

GRIMSBY Town Council moves in a mysterious way. "Steps are to be taken" by them, I see, to recover a tombstone which they supplied to the owner of a coffee-bar, and which he is using as a table for dirty pots, because it is felt that using a tombstone for this purpose is lacking in respect for the dead. Presumably if it is recovered it will be used for the purpose the Council originally scheduled for it. You would like to think, no doubt, that this was a highly respectful purpose. Well, as a matter of fact the tombstone was to be broken up and used as foundation for new paths in the recreation ground.

Professionals

OVERHEARD in corridor at very front of train coming into Waterloo from deep Hampshire:

A (popping head out of window): "Platform Nine."

B: "And there goes the 'fifty. We're on time."

C: "Half a minute late. (Ruminatively) Good platform, Nine."

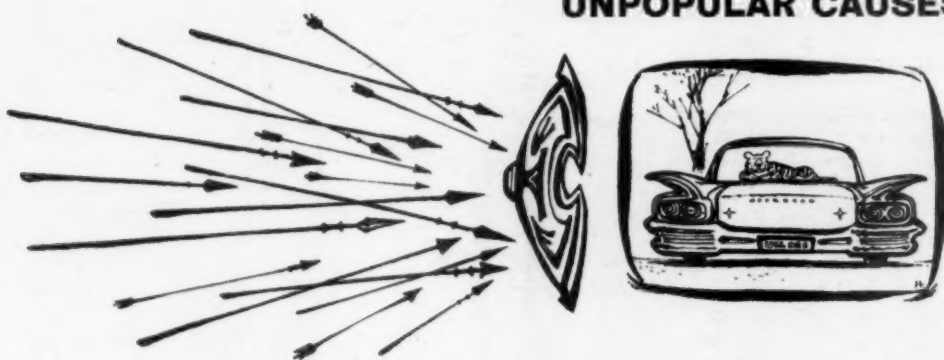
A: "Excellent." (*Exeunt omnes*)

—MR PUNCH



"Why, of course, Mr. Krushchev, it's perfectly all right bringing along your cousin Tito, cousin Gomulka, cousin Kadar, cousin Nasser . . . and their friends and their friends' friends who happen to have arrived unexpectedly . . ."

UNPOPULAR CAUSES



In Defence of VULGARITY

by Kenneth J. Robinson

"Do you think," asked Hamlet, "I meant country matters?" And he goes on asking that question—on stage, screen and radio—without causing the smallest twitter among watch committees, boards of censors or dear old ladies. Yet I can still remember the shocked thrill of discovering, as a fairly mixed infant, what this question meant to Hamlet's unchatterly lover. To me it meant something sensational; it meant that Shakespeare could be vulgar. This brought him to life—just as Beethoven first came to life for me in the Gents at the Albert Hall. It was here, during an interval, that I found musicians were ordinary people—with mortal longings beneath the gray stains on their waistcoats. "With a bit of luck," said one of them, "we'll get through the bleeding Eroica before the pubs close." From this moment I was really in touch with the classics.

The charm of vulgarity is that it *does* put you in touch with life, whether you're fingering those gloriously ambiguous seaside postcards (they've been swept virtually under the carpet—to the icy, wind-torn east coast where no one can keep still long enough to understand them) or reading a play by Charles Morgan. And I don't mean John Osborne. I know Mr. Osborne does very nicely as a shock-tactician, but nothing in Paul Slickey's world gets anywhere near the vulgarity of some of Mr. Morgan's characters. They have the effrontery to be Christians—to know what they believe and to act on their beliefs. I have seen good men enraged by this crude intrusion of an author's personal faith into popular entertainment. It is hardly surprising. After all, even T. S. Eliot—in spite of his heavily-religious sub-plotting—keeps his characters in decent doubt. And although Robert Bolt's man for all seasons is, of course, deeply religious, he is also a martyr—and martyrs are never vulgar enough to embarrass the ordinary man.

What does embarrass the ordinary man is the sight of another one vulgarly displaying his riches—particularly if they include something as intangible as religious faith. My

most pleasantly vulgar memory is of an incident at an early post-war conference of would-be world-betterers. They were all architects, and in those blissful days of building restrictions they could do no more harm than patch up the world with words. The words were poor tortured things, twisted into the tangled jargon of men unfortunate enough to Care about the Fundamental Needs of Twentieth-Century Man. How, they asked—in a score of different phrases—could the Architect fulfil his Birthright as Co-ordinator of Basic Human Requirements? Brains were racked, slogans were coined and minds were boggled. And then, just as it seemed that the Architect's Place in Society was dependent on Greater Recognition by an Enlightened Public, a clear, cool voice knifed the hot air. "Our problem, gentlemen," said the youngest man present, "has a simple solution. We must ask for God's help in all we do."

The chairman smiled wanly through the sickly silence and hurriedly addressed the frightened delegates on the advantages of regarding architecture as frozen music. But the conference never really recovered. Nothing so vulgar had happened since the small boy commented on the Emperor's clothes—apart from Dorothy Sayers messing about with the Gospels and D. W. Griffith matching a life-or-death car chase with the Crucifixion.

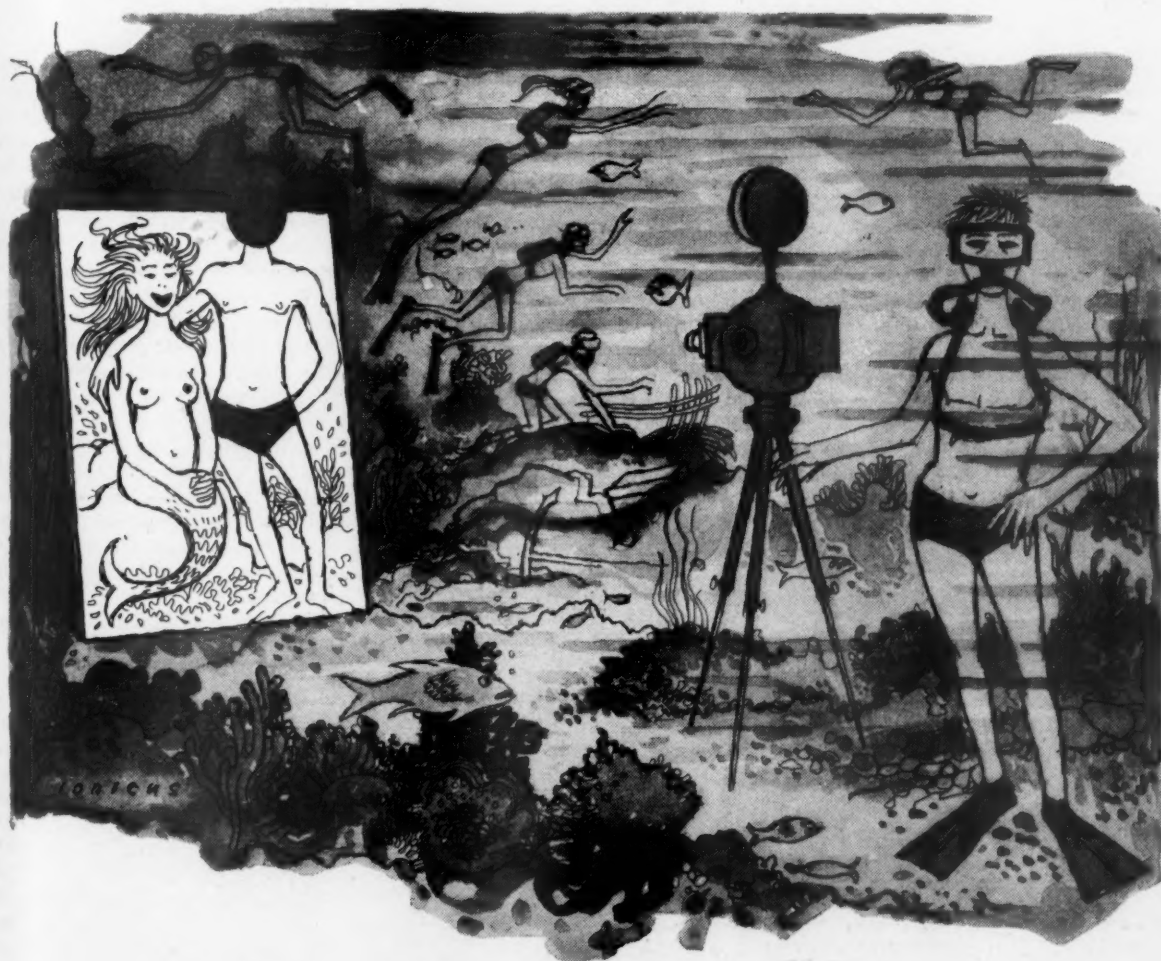
Such vulgarity is an inspiration. But then true vulgarity is almost a spiritual thing, possessed only by people with generous, bulging souls. And if that gives you a picture of beaming old men wanting to be your father, or motherly women on packets of tea, you are getting the wrong picture. The truly vulgar are not necessarily old, though they are certainly never very young (vulgarity is a mature virtue). Nor are the vulgar to be found in just one class. In fact, they have only one important thing in common, and that is the egginess of their heads. The most stimulating vulgarity is often found where the humblest origin is mixed with the brightest intelligence. But there's a danger here: this kind

of vulgarian may have more chips on his shoulder than on his knee-cradled newspaper. And although anarchy is a useful ingredient of vulgarity, it must be quiet, good-humoured anarchy—not the sort based sourly on class hatred.

Still, the Angry Man who is also fortunate enough to be a vulgar one often has an enormous advantage—he *looks* vulgar. His hands, even if they don't actually droop below his knees, look as if they would be more comfortable there. This has a reassuring effect on the people he talks to, and can easily lead him to the career of television interviewer. His female equivalent—and thank Heaven for her!—is, of course, the queenly barmaid type, whose soggy-biscuit eyelids are bluer with intellectual fatigue than with eye-shadow. By this I mean fatigue brought on through desultory, after-theatre, grasshopper gossip. The vulgar woman is never angry or intense about anything for longer than an explosive, illogical half-minute, so she has more subjects of bright conversation per evening than most people to weary her. And because she is never bothered by the foolish reticence of the discreet she continually wears herself out with amusing exchanges of self-analysis.

In short, vulgarity—But no, vulgarity cannot *be* short: it covers too wide a range. I see it just as clearly in the golden-eagled embassy of Grosvenor Square and in the baroque public lavatory on the sea-front at Great Yarmouth. (This little building deteriorates from vulgarity to good taste once you read the lettering on it, which says "Gentleman's Lavatory" on one side and "Ladies Cloak Room" on the other.) Here again—in architecture—social scale has nothing to do with vulgarity. These vastly different buildings are both vulgar because they are both engagingly and aggressively indiscreet. The Yarmouth lavatory clamours rudely for attention to a nation that is shy of natural function expressed in architecture. And the Embassy is a tactless attempt, by the American architect Saarinen, to keep in keeping with a bit of Georgian London that doesn't happen to be there. Because of this it is restrained in its vulgarity.

If Britain can repress a lively American mind, no wonder it cramps the imagination of its own well-bred architects. We get nearest to vulgar architects like America's Saarinen, Italy's Nervi and Brazil's Niemeyer—with their ostentatiously-springing fins and shells—in our best modern churches.



Perhaps this is the one kind of building where the architect feels that decoration for emotional effect doesn't break his unwritten vow to provide good, plain British fare. Elsewhere there have been several attempts to *apply* decoration to buildings—but this is not nearly as boldly vulgar as incorporating it in the structure. And while our enlightened county councillors are smugly patting themselves on their plump backs, after allocating a few shillings per square façade for pretty mosaics of cut-price broken tiles, other countries are evolving richly-decorative structural styles (including a nice line in American-Japanese-Reinforced-Venetian-Gothic) and earning for them the American label of Honky Tonk architecture.

Honky Tonk is what we are all wanting more of: call it, if you like, the New Vulgarly. We need to apply it to everything we do—to our buildings, our industrial design (has the knobless drawer *really* come to stay?) and even our manners. Especially our manners. The bad ones, in particular, are terribly unpolished nowadays. We push, bite, scratch and grumble but we have forgotten how to cultivate that pearl of gracious vulgarity, the Retort Courteous. Yet, with a little ingenuity we could all be practised performers, fighting back against the purveyors of "set-teas-only" and the shopkeepers who "don't get no call for it." How about making a vulgar start with British Railways? Next time the waiter pours your first-class coffee into your second-best lap, write his sixpenny tip on a bounceable cheque and tuck it, with a well-buttered roll, down the front of his trousers.

If, as with all social reforms, the problems involved in the quest for vulgarity sometimes seem too large to face, let me recommend a few exercises designed to restore faith in the need for a National Vulgarity Drive. (1) Watch the Monday morning previews of the week's television commercials. Note how vulgarity is shunned because of the honest, jarring note it would provide next to all that coyness, imbecility and downright lying. (2) Take half-a-dozen bus rides across the city of London. Note how vulgarity is skilfully avoided in post-war office development. The reason, hitherto unpublished, is a high-level fear that pedestrians might otherwise damage themselves, while admiring the lively architecture, by walking carelessly into stationary queues of buses, taxis etc. (3) Go to the paté department of you-know-where in Piccadilly. Note the too-refined way the present-day customer throws his money about. You might wait for six weeks before getting a glimpse of the store's hey-day vulgarity, when a Daimler chauffeur would walk out with nine-pennyworth of escargot shells hooked, in a miniature bag, round his little finger.

These are gruelling exercises for the sensitive mind. Let me sweeten the gruel with a hint I have found useful. If you want to be happily reminded of the subtle joys of vulgarity at its most sophisticated, follow these instructions carefully in the correct order:

(1) Take an elegant, witty but introspective woman to lunch. (2) Order her an artichoke. (3) Ask her where she has been all your life. (4) Watch and listen.

Further contributors:

JOHN WAIN
STEPHEN POTTER



It's Less of a Strain to Travel by Drain

By E. S. TURNER

WHAT is it that comes and goes on four thousand wheels yet remains in the same place—and spells happiness and deliverance for the submerged masses?

The answer, as every schoolboy will soon know, is Britain's first Travolator. This is a twin conveyor belt three hundred and fifty-four feet long capable of carrying 30,000 stockbrokers an hour out of the earth. It has been installed, after a long and gruesome operation amid the disordered guts of the City of London, at the north end of the rail tunnel which carries 40,000 people daily between Waterloo Station and the underground station at the Bank.

This subterranean link, known unaffectionately as the "Drain," was opened by the Southern Railway in 1898, when the science of squeezing human beings through holes in the ground was still in its infancy. In those days stockbrokers were so grateful for being propelled under the Thames that they did not greatly resent the long trudge up to the daylight at the Bank. It was the flabby, between-the-wars generation, with its pampered regiment of typists, that began to clamour for escalators, and in the late 'thirties was told that it would have them. Hitler put a stop to this decadence and the present operation was not begun until

1957, only to be slowed down on the Chancellor's orders. Already it has cost well over £750,000, a considerable sum to expend, as some may think, in order to save people the fatigue of putting one foot in front of the other. As far as British Railways is concerned the installation of the Travolator is an act of the purest benevolence, for it will earn not a penny in revenue.

By the time the Lord Mayor, under whose cellars the monster operates, is formally introduced to it next Tuesday, the tracks will have been well tested. They have been rumbling away, day by day, under an enormous load of iron weights and have also carried a less stable freight of typists from the Otis Elevator Company. Properly, a test like this should be carried out by a battalion of Foot Guards (or the Bank of England picquet at the least), but the operators were apparently anxious to prove that the tracks could survive the peculiar difficulties posed by stiletto heels.

To look at the Travolator is just an escalator without steps, of modest gradient but of unusual length. At rush hour both pathways will move in the same direction and those perverse enough to seek to travel in the opposite direction will do so on foot by tunnel (but a much brighter tunnel than before). On either side of the Travolator are the



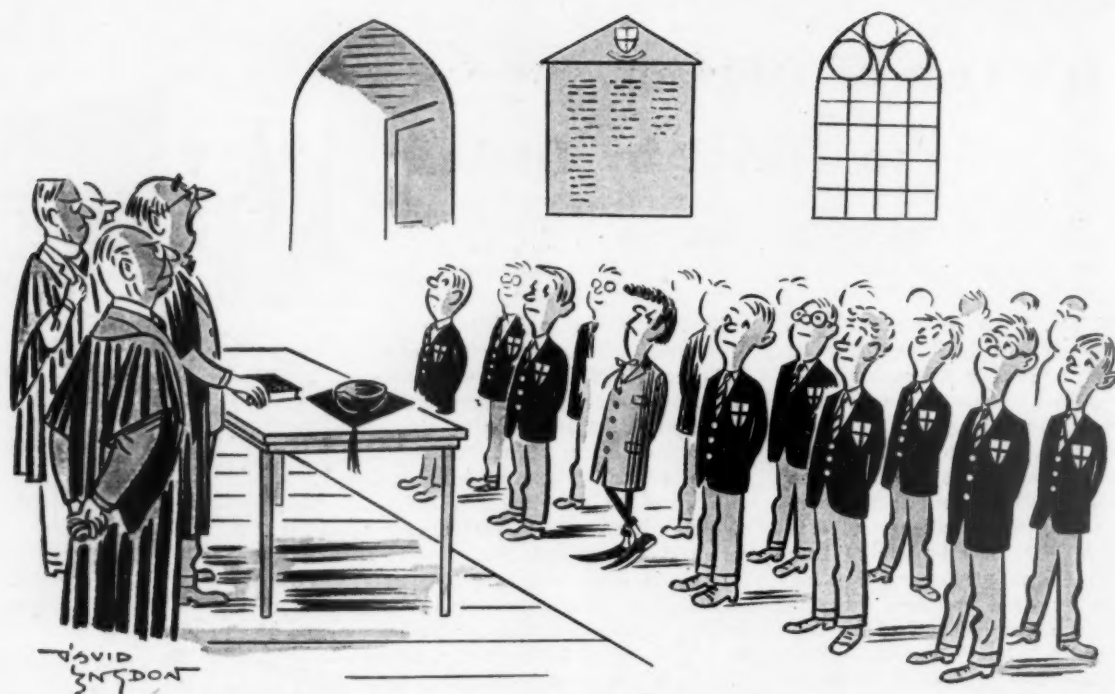
"So much for Macmillan's promises—here's another example of British expansionist imperialism."

usual frames for pictures of females in their cups; and no doubt, as on the best escalators, there will be a man capable of changing a picture while the track is moving, that is, by marking time while he opens the frame and shuts it again. This is one of the sights of London which never fails to fascinate visiting crofters.

The trouble with the Drain, up to now, has been that during peak traffic the multitude may take up to thirty minutes to do a five-minute journey (hence the expression "rush hour"). This delay is caused by the arrival of trains when the platforms and escape tunnels are still choked with people. They are unable to move faster because of selfish and effete citizens who refuse to race up a series of steps and slopes with god-like, or at least goat-like, ardour, thus enabling others to shuffle.

On the whole discipline in the Drain is good. The staff show restraint; they do not ram their buttocks against the buttocks of the passengers to get them into the trains, as is the genial custom of the New York subway. A long-suffering sage in uniform said "You don't get the West End trade, thank





"My topic this morning is Individual Freedom . . ."

goodness. Not many long-toed types on this run. None of those shaggy girls in bare feet—they never come east of Charing Cross. The Waterloo and City's no place for bare feet."

Will the Travolator speed progress through the Drain? "It may whisk them up more quickly," said a defeatist from Pudding Lane, "but what will happen when it carries them down by the hundred on to platforms that are full already?" All his pals had been discussing this risk; the carnage, they plainly thought, would be terrific. Still, as the man from Pudding Lane admitted, there are emergency buttons on the Travolator. Probably the human sacrifice could be halted even in the jaws of Moloch.

Asked whether he thought it reasonable for British Railways to spend nearly a million pounds to save him the trouble of walking three hundred and fifty-four feet, a creased old man with a carnation thought for a moment, said "Yes," glared suspiciously and moved on. One or two said they hadn't thought of it quite like that, but the general opinion seemed to be that it was better to spend money on Travolators than on satellites.

A freckled girl with a copy of *Honey* thought the Travolator a good idea but felt a chair lift would have been more fun, as undoubtedly it would.

"People make jokes about the delay in putting in this 'Travolator,'" said a rather tense young man in an open collar, who said he had often come down to watch. "But if you ask me it's a damned clever piece of work. Look at all the sewers they had to move. Some of these smooth types ought to try moving a four-foot sewer. Do you know what else they had to do? There was a filled-in river down there and they had to take the filling out again. You want to try taking the filling out of a filled-in river some time."

He was right, too. The filled-in river down there was the Wallbrook.

A man from Lombard Street had a theory that Travolators would be unnecessary if people could be made to stop waddling as they walk. "You stand in any crowd that's moving slowly. People move from side to side more than they move forward. It makes it twice as hard to overtake. And there ought to be a law against women carrying fishing baskets full of knitting."

Not greatly in favour of the Travolator was a hard-bitten philosopher with an obscure buttonhole badge who reckoned that he had spent about a year in the Drain. He was not very explicit, but his attitude seemed to be that if he had not spent it in the Drain he would have spent it in the office or at home, so what the hell did it matter?

An official working on the installation felt pretty sure that this was the longest Travolator in the world. But it wasn't the first moving pavement in Britain, oh, no. "There was one at the Wembley Exhibition in 1924," he said. "It worked on a sort of Archimedean screw. King George the Fifth rode on it. Wonder what happened to *that*!"

Sprinkled about the Bank station are posters in which British Railways thank the public for their "patience and endurance" over many years in climbing unaided to the surface. It is doubtful whether travellers on any other line have ever been thanked for displaying such qualities. So far as is known no other Travolators are contemplated. To qualify for one, all you have to do is to show patience and endurance for sixty years.

Gilding the Geese

By R. G. G. PRICE, author of "How to Become Headmaster"*

IN the past, anything written by headmasters received almost obsequious credence. Their testimonials and reports were firmly drafted, rhadamanthine to a fault and frank to the point of relish. They wrote things like "Mr. Seth Simpson is slovenly in word, thought and deed. Any headmaster would be ill-advised to engage his services" or "The boy Hooper minimus will end on the gibbet." But they would also write "My dear pupil and friend Austin Holyweather will prove himself the finest classic of his decade. The Fellows would be culpably foolish to miss the opportunity of counting him among the scholars of their College." Whether favourable or hostile, their words were accepted without question.

Compare this reverence with the reactions of Mr. Walter Fryer of Nottingham, whose revulsion against reports written by headmasters on university candidates has started all sorts of fun. "Wildly inflated panegyrics," "Absurd and harmful," they pour in urging the fitness for an Honours Course of pupils who are sub-academic, if that. He goes on to say, a bit oddly, that the writers are obviously neither stupid nor ignorant. The inflation is presumably a clever, learned kind of inflation, verging perhaps on the euphuistic, full of good quotations and with the brains showing through.

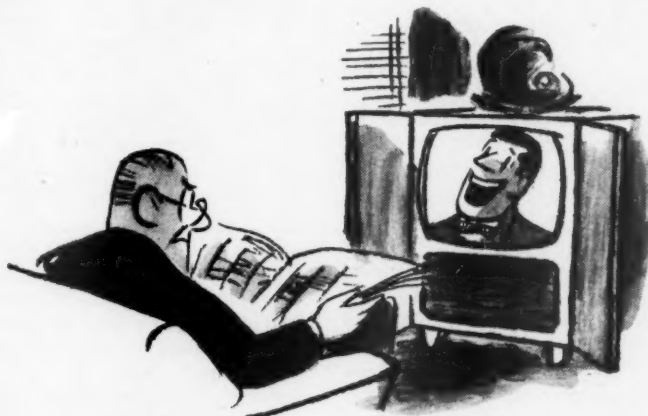
I can imagine the harassed don as he tries to find one candidate who could conceivably take notes at a lecture, while he opens report after report beginning "A very Buffoon," "He will set the Trent on fire," "If the intelligence of a Senior Wrangler be x , then the intelligence of Perkins may be expressed as $3x^2$," "One is irresistibly reminded of the men of the Renaissance," "The acuity of his intellect, like the depth of his response to all that is finest in Literature . . ." He knows that much the same would be said of a boy who could not remember the difference between an acid and an

alkali, even if he tied knots in his handkerchief.

The Times, which always enjoys this kind of thing, asked a number of university teachers to chip in with something quotable on the subject and most of these felt Mr. Fryer had overdone it. One strong supporter of the credibility of headmasters called his outburst "a most calculated disservice." But then he did also say "It is our job to find out our headmasters," which suggests he felt the onus is on the

university to be suspicious rather than on the headmaster to be accurate. In the course of his panegyric of headmasters he said rather mysteriously "Headmasters would be the first to admit their mistakes." This can only mean that in any race to confess headmasters come in first, beating professors, principals and tutors in charge of admissions. It strikes me as being an odd trait to pick out for praise.

Another keen academic mind says the trouble is that the headmaster of the



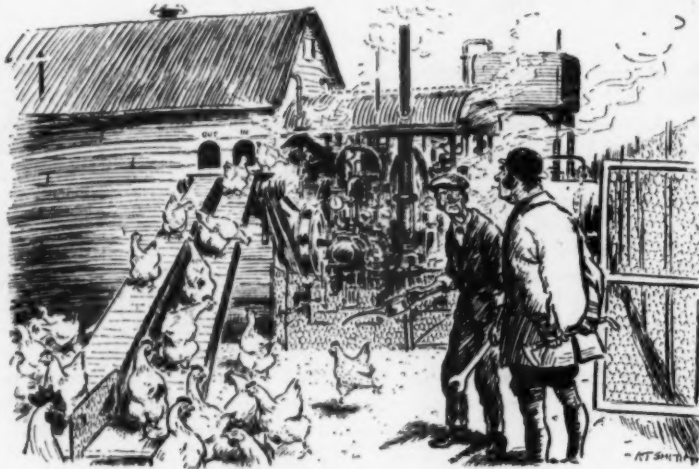
"Thanks for inviting us into your living room."



**How to Become Headmaster* is published by Anthony Blond at 10/6.

THEN AS NOW

Perhaps the question whether broiler farms are industrial or agricultural should have been solved, or at least raised, fifty years ago.



INTENSIVE CULTURE

Scientific Chicken Farmer.—"YES, YOU WERE RIGHT. THE FILTERED AND ICED WATER, THE ELECTRIC FANS AND THE HOT-WATER PIPE PERCHES DIDN'T SEEM TO TOUCH 'EM; THE FRENCH COOKING, THE GRAMOPHONE DURING MEALS, AND THE CINEMA ON WET DAYS LEFT 'EM COLD; BUT BY GEORGE, OLD MAN, THE HENS DO APPRECIATE THAT MOVING STAIRCASE. SINCE ITS INSTALLATION THE EGG OUTPUT HAS INCREASED 90 PER CENT."

September 17, 1913

school that sends only a very occasional pupil to the university "might not be sufficiently aware of the national standard appertaining." This suggests that Mr. Fryer may be suffering not only disingenuous panegyrics from the learned but rustic commendations that reflect a degree of isolation we too easily assume has been destroyed by the development of transport. Searching in vain for a candidate likely to be able to grasp the difference between the Restoration and the Reformation, he gets bogged down in reports beginning "Young David Finch is apt at ciphering" or "Thos. Woodland has gone through the hardest Reader twice and is thoroughly conversant with the use of globes" or even "Hilary ffinnes Mortimer is of good family and an accomplished falconer."

Most of the comments point out that the universities keep an eye on those heads whose judgment is known to be unreliable. Can there be some sort of black-list circulated among Vice-Chancellors, some collection of reports not by but on Heads? "Discount anything

Higgs of Brick Grammar says about any boy with a pretty sister," "The standard at John Hoggett's is so low the Head thinks any pupil who has read a book in a stiff cover must be scholarship timber," "Lumple always calls his candidates 'Outstanding,' but once they come up they drink all the time."

The headmaster may earn disapproval and suspicion from the universities if he overpraises; but he is going to be in trouble with his governing body, staff and parents if he is lukewarm. On Speech Day he is expected to announce that the school has more pupils at the university than ever before, and to hell with reserving the limited number of places available for the candidates who will make best use of them. Any statement that he has scratched his runners to give a chance to a better stable is going to gain him obloquy rather than respect and headmasters are no lovers of obloquy.

They are, on the whole, optimistic men and they like to feel that their methods give their pupils a flying start in life. What more natural than for them to think that having come under their influence is itself evidence of fitness for higher education? False modesty is not an occupational disease and many reports with low diagnostic value may be the products of misjudgment rather than cunning.

When composing one of these boosts or boy-blurbs, the head will be lucky if he has ever taught the subject of it. In many schools he will not know him at all. (There have been schools in which the head was pretty hazy about the staff.) He will have to depend on his masters for guesses about how the lad is likely to make out face to face with a book in a bed-sitter. Perhaps one day we shall get a blast from a headmaster complaining that all he gets from his underlings are wildly inflated panegyrics.

Age Group

FEAR, if you will, his dollars, charm, religion,
His giddy scaling of the highest rung,
Fear lest his dad's ideas should be his pigeon—
But don't go on about his being young.

Why should not strength and subtlety illumine
At forty-three, or lack of drive be feared?
Why should he want political acumen
Simply because he never grew a beard?

Infirmary of purpose? Never that.
Finesse and courage also can endure
Men of his age. Behind that swarthy mat
Makarios is in his forties too.

— PENELOPE HUNT

King Robert the Bruce, permit me to ask

Was Bannockburn Really Necessary?

By a Military Observer

HINDSIGHT, as applied to military history, is now accepted. Montgomery's battle of El Alamein: Victory or Myth? We have been invited to look back to the desert war of the 1940s, but why leave it there? Why not go back six hundred years and put the test of hindsight on a vintage battle?

I have been applying this new principle to an appreciation of a battle fought at Bannockburn, two miles south-south-east of Stirling (British Railways) on Monday, June 24, 1314. (See *Uncooked Archives of Scotland*, volume IV, chapter 6: Operation Battle-axe; map reference Saltire, sheet 2: 456789. These archives may be seen on application to the third assistant keeper to the Lord Lyon, King of Arms.)

This battle of Bannockburn was fought between King Robert the Bruce

of Scotland and King Edward II of England who led his army up from Berwick to relieve the English garrison at Stirling, the gateway to the highlands.

Until this day, Bannockburn has been accepted as a victory for the Scots, so I make my appreciation from the Scots' side.

APPRECIATION OF BATTLE

1. Information

Own troops: half a division of armour, three divisions of infantry, the equivalent of six divisions of camp followers. (It was in the month of June, remember, and it is more than likely that large numbers of ghillies and other servants making their way to the highland moors for the opening of grouse shooting on August 12 had been forced to join the Scottish army.)

Enemy: ten divisions of armour, about 30,000 horse power (armour-

plated Shire stallions and geldings) and fifteen divisions of bowmen and infantrymen.

The respective strengths still subject to correction.

2. Intention

To destroy the enemy.

3. Method

To entice the enemy armour into concealed traps in boglands.

There, under conventional Staff College headlines, we have the classic contour of battle, and please note the enemy were the English. Any questions?

I have not met King Robert the Bruce. Anything I write in this examination of his battle is not influenced by personal contact with the Scottish commander, though in my youth in Scotland I had schoolfellows of the name of Bruce, one of whom had a claim in his family to the possession of the same battle-axe which King Robert



the Bruce used in slaying Sir Henry de Bohun (*q.v.*) a kinsman of the Earl of Hereford, one of the English lords in the battle.

The only full account of personal combat in the battle of Bannockburn is devoted to the bloodstained encounter between de Bohun and Bruce, who was mounted on a much smaller palfrey and yet mightily cleaved de Bohun in two, or three. Robert the Bruce had an observant and admiring public relations officer who was ultimately responsible for the naming of Bannockburn as Operation Battle-axe, in tribute to the great individual feat of King Robert. Hitherto the King's record had been over-sentimentalized by a tale of a cave and a spider.

To return to the battle, the question we have to ask is this. Did Bruce really win at Bannockburn?

Man in Apron

by Larry



1



2

"Some say that we won, and some say that they won, and some say that none won at all man, but of one thing I'm sure that on Bannock moor a battle there was which I saw man." This mutilated fragment of a Scots song, recently discovered by research, hints at a doubt about the full flavour of victory which has been claimed for centuries by the Scots without challenge by the other side.

First let us look briefly at the battle before we analyse the score.

On his march to the north, from Berwick, the Earl of Gloucester, Constable of England, rashly hurled his heavy cavalry against Bruce, suffering severe losses from the Scots pikemen who stoutly stood their ground. That was first round to Bruce, on the night before the battle.

According to my information, the English senior officers then retired to mess and ate an elegant dinner off gold plate, washed down expensively, but neglected to give their men a hot meal for the night and, even worse, did not see to the proper stabling of their horses.

Perhaps an army which thought so much of its stomach did not deserve to win.

On Monday, June 24, it was a weary English army which greeted the dawn. Some of the men, lucky ones, had lain down by the side of their horses to win warmth in the chilly mist of a Scottish summer night.

When the battle began, the English had already lost the will to fight. King Robert had probably taken over his plan of battle from his chief of staff or from one or other of his brilliant subordinates. Some say the victor of Bannockburn was really Sir Robert Keith, the Marshal of Scotland, or Randolph Earl of Moray with his five hundred gallant pikemen who proved the error of the English in launching a cavalry attack without first breaking the pikemen. The English cavalry could not get going and their archers were not at their best.

To crown all, at the height of the battle the Scottish camp-followers (see *Appreciation of Battle under Information—own forces*) came yelling down a hill, yelling what later became known as the Hampden Park football roar. It was the end of the English for that day. They feared they were about to be overwhelmed by fresh Scottish troops in an enormously strong reinforcement. They turned and fled.

Such is my summary of the battle and with or without your permission it is the only account I intend to offer. As I have already admitted, I was not at the battle on June 24, 1314, but was it really a victory for King Robert the Bruce?

Consider a few facts.

His intention of battle was to destroy the English.

Have the English been destroyed?

Not yet.

The newspapers reported in 1957 the gift to Stirling of the field of Bannockburn, the actual field on which Bruce flew his standard. The gift was from a Bradford (England) company which had acquired an estate in Scotland.

Any Scots who feel a resurgent passion to reopen the issue of Bannockburn, in the light of this rethinking, can still make the attempt to conquer the English by catching the 8.30 (†) a.m. train from Glasgow Central due Euston 3(A).25 p.m.

Have a car to meet you in London.

—HUGH GUNNING

(†) Through carriages.

(A) Limited train.

Father O'Reilly

(Roman Catholic priests in Ireland have been forbidden to attend race-meetings, own racehorses or dogs, bet, or drink in bars.)

NO longer shall Father O'Reilly,
Who ran those great dogs at
Clonmel,

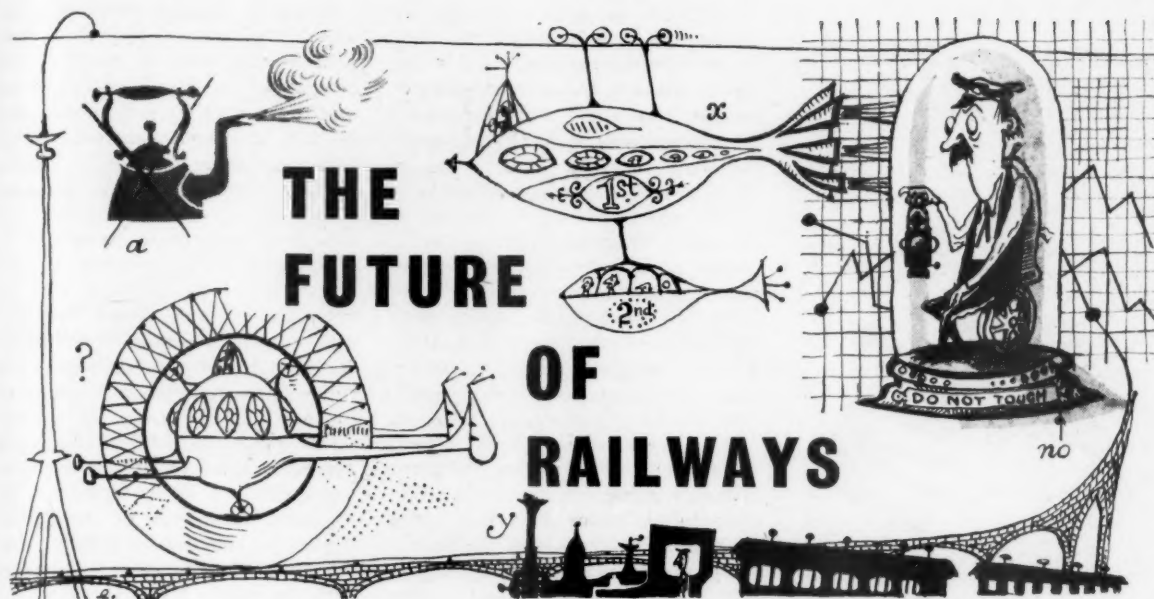
Be leading his dog to the slipper.
T'was himself he was leading to Hell.

No longer shall Father O'Reilly,
Who won the big race with his mare,
Be greeted each morn with a whinny,
The prettiest voice in Kildare.

No longer shall Father O'Reilly,
At "The Dolphin" be standing his
round,
His mellifluous voice will be missing,
And 'tis sure we shall all miss the sound.

No longer shall Father O'Reilly,
Go racing or coursing or bet,
But I think, if I know the old Father,
We shall see quite a bit of him yet.

—ROBIN MOUNT



1 MAIN LINES

It is pointless to debate the future of British Railways without a clear appreciation of the FACTS. A highly qualified PUNCH team now presents an ENTIRELY NEW set of FACTS on three vital aspects of the railways of to-morrow: Main Lines, Branch Lines, Passengers. Until these have been fully grasped there is little to be gained by discussing a suitable control for the whole, vast nexus. Where shall we recruit a governing body both informed and impartial? The Convocation of the Church of England may leap to mind to-day, but would it in fact be equal to the changed conditions of to-morrow? These pages provide the basis on which any such decision must be reached.

IT has been suggested that the introduction of jet-propelled trains capable of hurtling from London to Glasgow in one hour on a cushion of air may deprive passengers of some of the traditional delights of British rail travel. To allay these fears, and others of a more general nature, some typical questions are answered below.

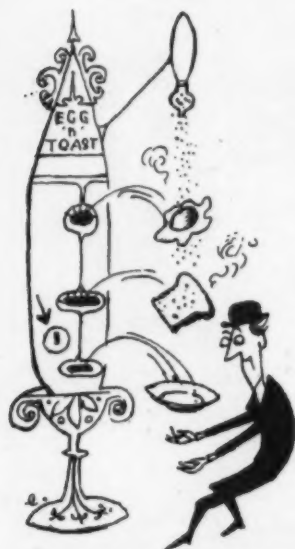
Q. What provision will be made, if any, for those of us to whom no journey north is complete without the two hours of anxious uncertainty spent waiting in the windy caverns of Crewe at four in the morning, and the final spine-chilling realization that we are, in fact, on the wrong platform and have missed the connection?

A. Adequate arrangements have been made to cater for Crewe-fanciers. For technical details see answer to question about intermediate stations.

Q. As I understand it, these trains will be supported above the rails by air being squirted downwards from some new-fangled contraption. Will there not be a danger to life and limb when the train arrives in the station and the air is abruptly switched off?

A. No. The air will be gradually switched off, and the train will fall to rest on the rails with no more than a gentle crash. Provided you keep your more fragile luggage on your lap, no great harm will be done. ("Stations," by the way, will be referred to as "terminals.")

Q. May we be sure that the delightful, old-established chaos will be allowed to prevail at Euston, where the rich and haughty are entitled to push their way with well-bred savagery into taxis, leaving the awed and bewildered queuing



peasantry from the barbarous north to stand amid their heavy luggage and weep?

A. Yes. It will take more than jets to eradicate such charming feudal customs.

Q. What arrangements will be made to accommodate passengers who might wish to alight at intermediate stations?

A. Ejector seats will be provided for such passengers. At a given signal from the ticket-examiner those who wish to leave the train at, say, Rugby will each press a lever. They will then hold on to their belongings. After a count of ten they will be propelled smoothly through the roof of the coach to a height of one hundred feet. Their yellow individual parachutes will then open, and they will come gently to rest in a special siding. From here they will be collected in a station bus and conveyed (for a nominal fee of half a crown) to the dispersal point outside the first-class buffet. Those, on the other hand, wishing to join the train at an intermediate station should stand, at the appropriate time, within the white circle on the Up or Down platform as the case may be. As the train passes, they will be sucked painlessly into the luggage-van.

Q. Shall I be able to get a nice six-penn'orth of ghastly tea in a cup hewn from the living rock and decorated with alien cosmetics?

A. British Railways will strive to preserve all such incidental pleasures. These old-world receptacles will in any case be useful as ballast. Among other familiar items which will be retained, the following may be of interest. (a) *The broken window-strap.* These will be fitted to the air-conditioning controls, and passengers will be able to indulge themselves by complaining about faulty cross-ventilation even without knowing what it is. (b) *Cinders in the eye.* At the press of a button a shower of small plastic cinders will stream into the compartment or cabin, and the traditional train-conversation, with a slight variation, will remain appropriate: "Do you mind if I let in some cinders?"—"Not at all." (c) *The framed sepia photograph of holiday-makers at Keswick in 1910.* These will be blown up to life size and used as amusingly sophisticated decorative panels in the cocktail-lounge coaches. (d) *The standard amplified station announcement.* Recordings have been made of several of the most popular, raucous and magnificently incomprehensible examples, and these will be broadcast throughout the train at irregular intervals.

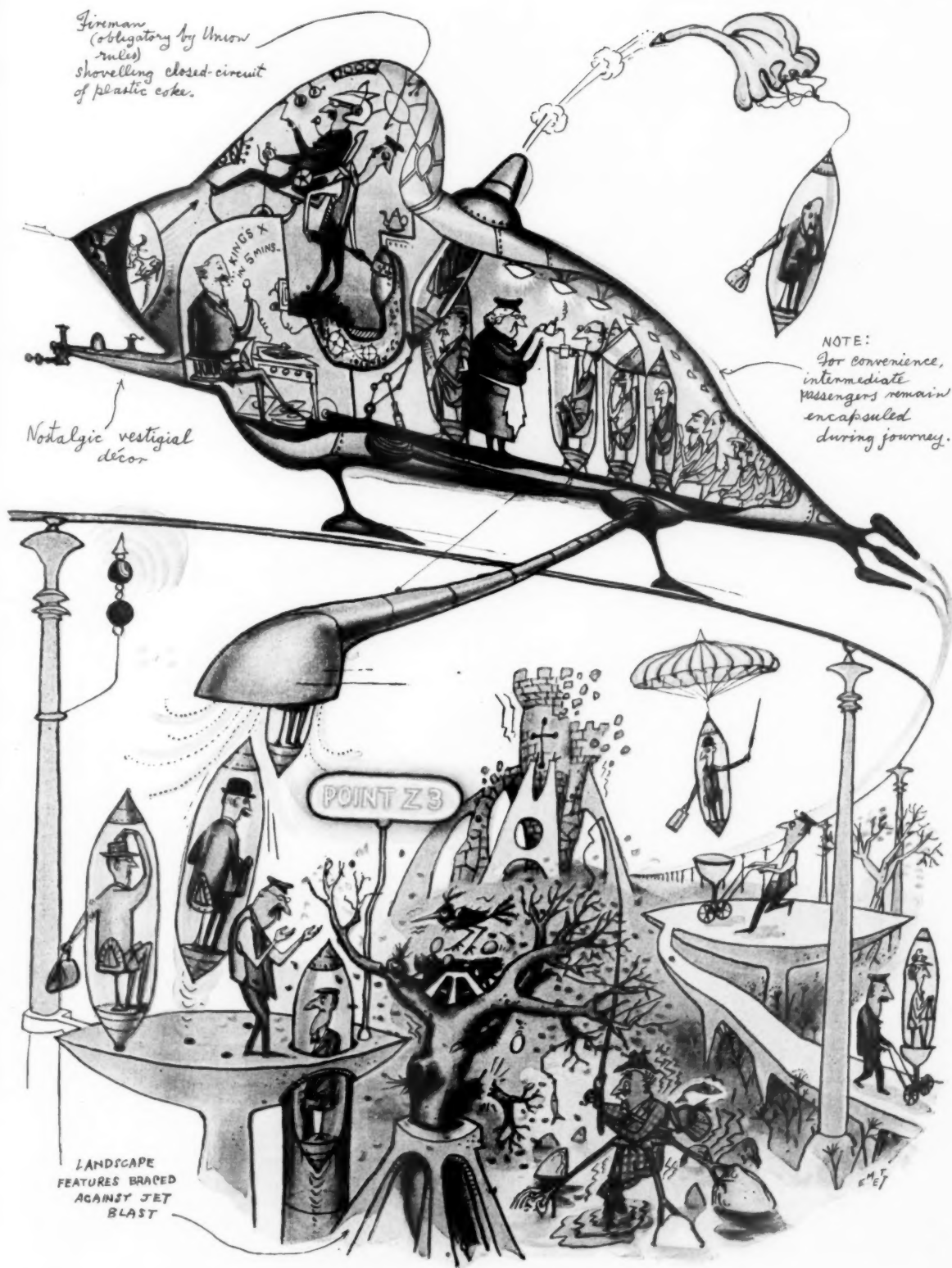
Q. Is there not a danger that porters, intoxicated by the heady air of the new jet age, may flock to help, suddenly spruce and fleet of foot, making arrival a pleasure at the streamlined terminal and thus seriously embarrassing the customers?

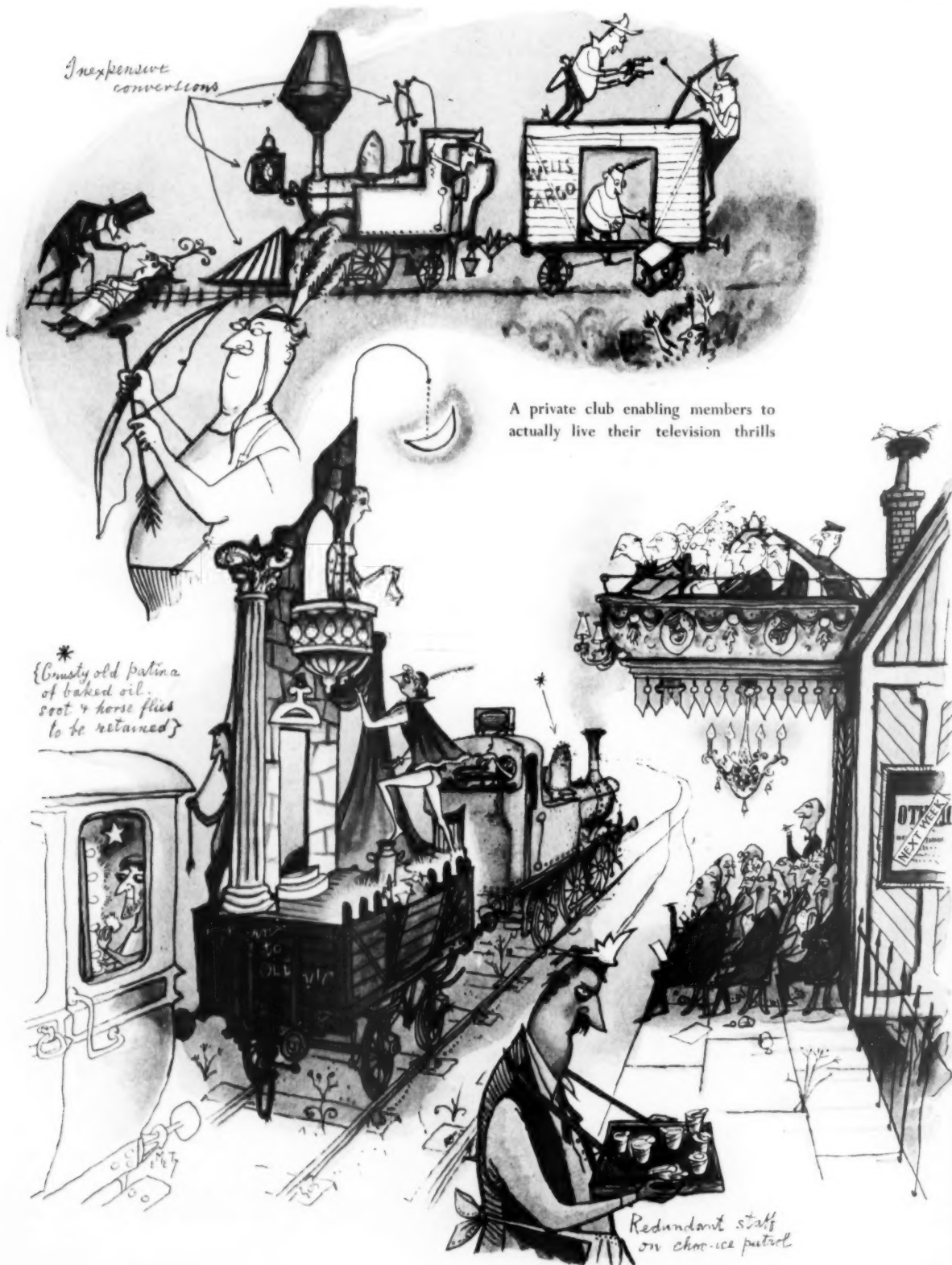
A. No.



Q. Having regard to the nature of the means of propulsion, may not a train journey now tend to come in the category of air travel? And will not several grave questions therefore arise? My little boy, for instance, gets air-sick. And what about insurance? Besides, we who really care about the pleasures of a railway journey are alarmed lest the whole atmosphere be ruined by the presence of air-hostesses and the like.

A. The authorities have this point well in mind. Compromise will be the keynote. Pending the findings of any Royal Commission which might be set up, journeys undertaken on the new trains will be regarded as rail travel, and the engines and carriages designated rolling-stock. With regard to the hostesses, these will be called rail-hostesses. They will be chosen for the severity of their demeanour, and issued with serviceable blue serge uniforms, black boots and porters' caps. Their duties will include handing round copies of *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald*, serving slabs of the standard B.R. fruit cake and Beaujolais, helping elderly passengers with their seat-belts, and moving second-class ticket-holders out of first-class compartments. It is not considered that they will make railway-lovers feel out of their depth. There will also, of course, be the occasional broadcast message from the control-room or footplate, but this has surely been a long-felt want on train journeys. A friendly word can mean so much on a dull stretch of line. "Good evening," for example. "Welcome aboard the Honourable Prudence Studmark, 66002, a standard gauge G type articulated jet locomotive with automatic couplings and Reidinger rotary cam poppet valve gear. Your driver is Henry Usherwood, your hostess Mrs. Dulcie Lummo. You may smoke. Our present speed is two hundred and three miles an hour, altitude an inch and a half, estimated time of arrival eighteen hundred hours. The radar screen shows heavy rain in Oldham. To our right, through a break in the fog, you should just be able to make out the Stackley Motive Power Depot, with its Wet Ash Pit, Water Softening Plant, Repair Shed, Sludge and Tippler Pits and Engine Examination and Lubrication Shed. British Railways hope you enjoy your trip."





2 BRANCH LINES

IT is always important to remember that the Greek drinking-cup that is the pride of the museum to-day was once made to drink from. Only after it had outworn its original function could it hope to be an object of admiration in itself.

British branch-lines face the same kind of future. In Britain, where antiquity is not only venerated but may also be called in to help balance the budget, it is unthinkable that branch-lines should be allowed to die out simply because their former purpose has been taken over by something else. They must turn, like the Greek cup, from useful objects into works of art; and naturally as works of art they will become so enhanced in value that their collection will be primarily in the hands of wealthy amateurs or syndicates, though with powerful backing from the state behind them. The difference will be that this backing will come not from British Railways but from the Arts Council.

How then will the branch-line of the future develop?

The problem may be considered under six heads:

(1) *Routes.* Branch-lines need no longer run between any particular points once those points are adequately served by bus, car, helicopter, and so on. Routes can therefore be chosen for their charm. A pioneer example already to be seen is the line running from Horsted Keynes to Sheffield Park, maintained primarily to deal with the bluebell-watching traffic. This is, of course, a rather primitive example of the art branch-line, and its function may well be considered too seasonal when the question arises of a claim on Arts Council funds. Lines should be taken along all-weather routes via castles, windmills, waterfalls, pinkfooted geese, etc. If funds proved sufficient, they might be periodically re-routed to take in bluebells, apple-blossom, Camberwell Beauties and Morris-dancing in due season, but it would be wrong to imagine that this could happen for a century or so yet.

In consideration of the help expected from the Arts Council, every effort must be made to route branch-lines to, or anyway among, such important festival centres as Aldeburgh, Haslemere, Glyndebourne and Aldermaston.

(2) *Passenger Traffic.* Emphasis must be laid on the fact that riding on branch-lines *will be an end in itself*. Passengers who want to use the line simply for making a journey are to be discouraged. It may prove desirable to confine the use of branch-lines to members of a National Branch-line Society, who should pay a subscription of several guineas a year. (The actual amount can be calculated when operating expenses are known; but it must in any event be considerable. It will not of course include fares, but will afford priority of booking and admission to engine-sheds and so forth.)

Passengers must be ready to act as crew when called on. There is a small

reserve of ex-railwaymen available at present to work as drivers, signalmen, and the rest, but this cannot last long and a national reserve of trained men should be formed. The prospect of being asked at a moment's notice to slip on an overall and shovel coal all day will be an added deterrent to people expecting to use the branch-lines simply for travel.

(3) *Freight Traffic.* No branch-line can be artistically complete without goods wagons. There is a variety of freight that may be considered suitable for transport on art lines, such as wild flowers, musical instruments, theatrical props and picnic requirements.

(4) *Rolling-stock.* The selection of rolling-stock is perhaps the most important consideration of all. A number of still-extant types of locomotive are on the point of becoming works of art as the railways turn over more and more to electricity and oil, and examples of these should be secured before the dealers move in and force up the prices. Ex-South Eastern and Chatham "E" Class 4-4-0s, 0-4-2 tanks from the Great Eastern blue period and early Great Western 0-6-0 saddle tanks may be good buys, and some ex-Great Northern articulated coaches will be an attractive rarity; but the choice is bound to depend a good deal on the Chief Mechanical Curator's personal taste.

(5) *Ancillary Services.* Just as British Railways operates its hotels and buffets, so the art lines will have to run their additional services both as a source of revenue and in pursuit of artistic integrity. Stalls selling fruit and flowers will be incorporated into station premises, and station-roofs, where they are strong enough, equipped with "waving-bays," as at London Airport, for the benefit of people wishing to wave at passing trains. (Admission will be to Associate Members only.) There is no objection to restaurant-cars as long as the service is strictly in period.

(6) *Finance.* Strictly speaking, branch-lines ought to be operated so that when all fares, subscriptions, fines for pulling the communication-cord and grants from the Arts Council and local authorities have been taken, a loss is incurred proportional to that involved by the commercial railways over an equivalent period. There seems little chance of this deficit being made up by



the state, so appeals to the public will have to be launched from time to time, e.g. Branch-line Day every year, and if necessary a World Branch-line Year every now and then.

As soon as the oldness of the branch-lines has changed from a reproach to a source of pride, and ownership has been wrested from the state and

restored to private collectors, complaints will disappear at once. Like the drinking-cup too fragile to drink from but exquisite in a glass case, the branch-lines will have sloughed off their old utilitarian function completely and replaced it with an artistic function more durable, more spiritual and, let it be said boldly, more British.

3 PASSENGERS

DR. REMUS CRANE BELT, Professor of Transport Psychology at Retford University, writes:

Brainwashing is not a term I care for, but something very close to the popular interpretation of it must take place among the travelling public if the new design for the railways is to succeed. To adapt a phrase I heard somewhere recently, "Railways were not made for man, but man for the railways," a fact which should have been established and recognized well over a century ago. Instead, the enticements of speed, comfort and a gaily-uniformed staff were from the first dangled before the passenger's eye, and he became disastrously conditioned to the idea that trains would carry him from one place to another without active hardship and at fixed times. The image persists. Progressively, over the years, subtle efforts have been made by railway authorities to eliminate this conception, but with small success. Platform staff have become scarcer, carriages dirtier, sandwiches staler, waiting-rooms damper; towels, and in many cases running water, have been withdrawn from the toilets; fares have been raised,

the incidence of breakdowns intensified, all to no purpose. On the contrary, these measures resulted in a positive resistance to change. The passenger, instead of accepting the new pattern, merely wrote to the papers demanding a return of the old.

It is now necessary, therefore, to impress upon the rail-going public, by every means within the authorities' power, the plain but painful truth that the old will not, repeat not, return.

How can this best be done?

The first step must be, in a way, a negative one—the immediate cessation of all railway advertising and propaganda designed to present the railways in terms of speed, cheapness, comfort and modernity. The British public is notably responsive to emphasis on the oddities of its national life and character, and the time has come to present our transport system in terms of quaint survival, of stubborn adherence to a way of life that should by all rational standards be dead and gone. Once the ticket-collector takes on something of the romance of a Queen's Waterman, the seeds of a reorientation will be sown.

Next, at a moment of suitable public receptiveness, a national appeal to the nation's courage and grit, launched by

a "blood, toil, tears and sweat" speech from the Prime Minister on all radio and television networks, will continue the work so well begun. It is difficult to mention the Second World War without a bitter reflection on the railways' missed opportunities in 1946: had these been seized, and a public conditioned to appalling discomforts been warned that things would get worse rather than better, the problems now facing us would never have arisen. But at least it is not too late to recapture the *spirit* of that war, and to present the railways as a challenge, and each individual journey as a courageous adventure. Let the British travelling public once see itself as the factor upon which the British Transport Commission *relies for its very survival*, and its first reaction to breakdowns, delays, burst luggage, draughts, withdrawal of services, and old cigarette packets stuffed down the upholstery, will be one of squared shoulders and pride to serve.

Lastly, let us not forget that British Railways have never relied exclusively, and never can, on the passenger. The railwaymen themselves must also be induced to adopt new methods. It is useless for the passenger to accept hardship and disruption unless these amenities are duly provided. While there remain isolated pockets of resistance among the staff—signalmen still reporting for duty on time, reactionary old porters still dispensing accurate information about platform numbers, hidebound old drivers still resolved to enter a terminus without actually hitting the buffers—complete passenger reorientation must remain a mere will o' the wisp. Can the staff, too, be brought to see reason in this way? Only time will tell.



Something of a Borzoi

By D. D. PORTER

EVER since the age of three when I had a contretemps among the table legs with my grandmother's Sealyham—a question of territorial rights—my feelings about dogs have been rather more than mixed. But in spite of the memory of those needle teeth that punctured the lobe of my pink, infant ear I had, until two years ago, been unwilling to pass final judgment on a whole race. The incident that caused me to come down off the fence about dogs in general on the side of the Anti-Canine Defence League occurred while I was spending a bewildered post-graduate year in France, where, it must be said, dogs generally know their place. I was employed as an assistant in a school and required to talk English for twelve hours a week—one of those sinecures that soured as the year wore on and opposition hardened into truculent anti-British feeling. By the beginning of January I had come to discover that the maintenance allowance I received did just that; it maintained me and afforded me my daily bread. For the occasional nibble at life's fruit cake, not to speak of its icing sugar, I would have to look elsewhere. It was thus that I went in search of private lessons and made up my mind once and for all about dogs.

A friend of a friend made it known to me that a wealthy bourgeois family was very anxious to find someone to give English conversation lessons to their son. For this I would receive six hundred francs a time and lunch. All I had to do was to talk English to the boy while we ate. Veiled, third-hand promises were breathed into my ear about Easter holidays in their villa at Cap Ferrat, and the outlines of a nubile daughter with too much time on her hands were sketched in.

I was living during that particularly severe winter in a large, high-ceilinged bedroom facing north that I had chosen on account of its coolness on one late autumn day of dusty heat. For heating there was a single, narrow radiator. With the snow piled up on the sill outside I would crouch there, embracing its four slim, silver bars that were never more than lukewarm

and abandon myself to elaborate, fantasy visions of heat and food. On the evening of the tenth of January I shivered myself to sleep, curled up womb fashion in one corner of the white waste of my vast double bed, promising myself that the next day would mark a turning point in my experience of France. At lunch time on that day I was to present myself for the first time for lunch and conversation.

At a quarter to twelve that morning I sprang out of bed and threw on all the clothes I had taken off the previous night before I was cut down by the cold air. Trousers, shirt, two sweaters, jacket and overcoat. Socks, shoes and over-shoes followed before I proceeded to the trying business of shaving at speed in ice-cold water. My lunch was at twelve and I had to get to the other side of town. By the time I had finished shaving there was blood and water on my collar and only half my face was smooth.

It was a little after half-past twelve when I found the house in a "*quartier chic*" two doors up from the Spanish consulate. It seemed very like an eighteenth-century "hotel," grey and very French in a sparely elegant way.

All the shutters were down and it had that forbidding, gone-away-for-the-duration look of so many French houses. I rang and waited suspiciously—I'd had trouble from continental doors before. But this door was conventional enough. It opened finally from the inside and I was faced across the opening with a shrivelled and diminutive figure in black. We considered each other in silence for a time while I rapidly tried to put together a sentence in French. But she got there first.

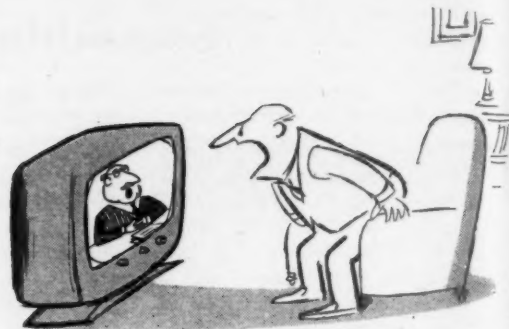
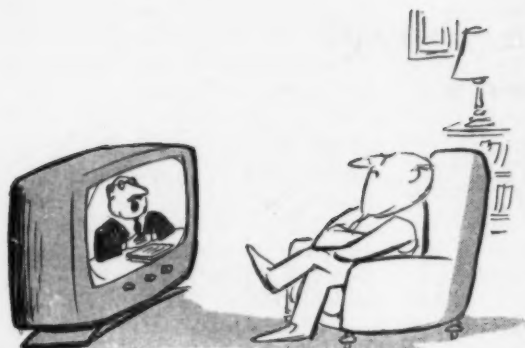
"*Vous désirez, Monsieur?*" She looked up at me through one fallow and heavy-lidded eye that peered out at me like a water rat from its hole in a river bank.

I drew a breath and started to explain, winding myself into one of those foreign sentences that proliferate endlessly away from me. I was the friend of a friend of the gentleman who was acquainted with the lady of the house and who had said that the "*fil*" of the lady of the—"Fils," she echoed. The word seemed to puzzle her.

"Fils," I repeated firmly—it was a word that I was sure I knew—and gestured in the air patting an imaginary



"Darling, it's just what I wanted."



head some three feet above the pavement. She watched my activity with narrow-eyed interest. Then fixed me again with her probing, slightly malevolent eye. Her other eye looked a good deal kinder, dimmed with age and greater understanding.

I decided to change my approach.

"*Anglais*," I insisted thumping my chest. "*Moi Anglais*."

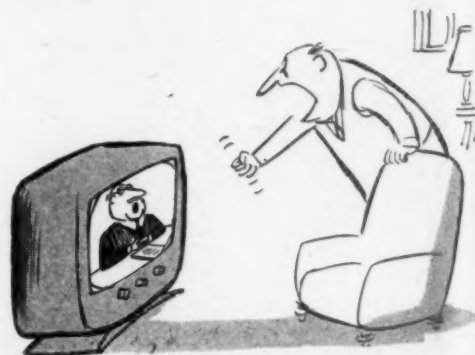
Much to my surprise that turned out to be excessively funny, for she broke

"*Moi, Boche*," she repeated and raised a quivering skinny arm in what I took to be a Nazi salute.

"*Oui, oui*," I said, nodding. Humour them, that's all you have to do, humour them. But she seemed to have taken to me, I saw with relief, and kept winking and shaking her head at me in a droll, knowing way.

"*Vous êtes invité par Monsieur?*" she finally asked from the gritty depths of her throat. She looked up at me, her

tapestries for most of its length. Opening wide glass doors she motioned me forward into a spacious drawing room at the far end of which was a dining recess. The table was laid for about a dozen people, I noticed with surprise. Cut glass and gleaming silver and cool white table linen were reflected in the dark glowing polish of the tabletop. This wasn't at all what I had expected. I thought in a moment of panic that I had better contract a



into wheezy, cracked laughter that left me open-mouthed and anxious for her health.

"*Boche, moi Boche*," she said and collapsed against the door-jam. She was obviously finding it difficult to do justice to the humour of the situation and get all the air she needed at the same time. Then she began to cough and two tears detached themselves slowly from her eyelids and meandered down corrugated, brown-paper cheeks.

I stepped inside the house and gave her a few tentative pats on the back. It was like handling my sister's baby; I was afraid that something might cave in or come away in my hands. Somehow I armed her to a seat in the vestibule.

little, whiskered mouth puckered in a question.

"*Par Madame*," I corrected her, keeping my left-hand, unshaven cheek averted from the black gimlet of that right-eye. That too was found hilarious.

"*Venez, Monsieur*," she said, getting up and giving me a knowing jab in the stomach with her elbow. "*Venez. Il faut attendre. Vous êtes trop tôt.*"

"*Trop tôt*." It was my turn to do the echoing. "*Trop tard*," I said in surprise.

She had to hold on to the banisters at that. I began to warm to her. Even my rarest, premeditated *mots* had never drawn this response.

She led me through the thickly carpeted hall that was hung with

headache and get out as fast as I could. But there were wonderful French culinary smells wafting in from the kitchen and I'd had no breakfast. I was also more than a little nervous of the effect of such a sudden announcement on my ancient friend.

"*Asseyez-vous*." She indicated some chairs placed round a low coffee table. Then she went out of another door shaking her head and muttering to herself. "*Par Madame*," I heard her say with a chuckle.

The room was furnished with contemporary furniture of the most elegant and expensive kind; bucket chairs, a curving TV settee, standard lamps with delicate, swan-like necks, thick,

white sheepskin rugs on the light-stained floor. Everything had been chosen with care and disposed by someone with an exceptional taste for interior decoration. There was a box of cigarettes on the coffee table and the art magazine, *L'Oeil*. A picture on the wall, a livid snowscape of a sad provincial church, caught my eye. It was, I noticed, a Utrillo.

This I felt, shedding my coat, was my spiritual home. I strolled about savouring the temperate air of this living-room, so redolent of gracious, monied ease. It was occurring to me with increasingly persuasive force that they might well have a spare room and that they would find my English conversation so obviously beneficial to their son that they would beg me to move in as house tutor. Warmth and just a little life-enhancing luxury and highly cultivated conversation. This at last was the *real* France that I was discovering. A studio with a sun lounge on the top floor and weekends of water ski-ing in their villa at the coast. The possibilities seemed endless. I tried three of the chairs in turn—there was one wooden chair in my own gaunt igloo—and finally settled for an off-white bucket model that sumptuously embraced me as I lowered myself into it. Helping myself to a cigarette I sat back to prepare appropriately gracious, witty sallies that I would produce with casual *savoir faire* over lunch. Each course would be highlighted by a sparkingly turned phrase that would rock them on their slender chairs.

I was about to start in on the soup when the glass door that the old lady had left ajar was pushed open and a large dog loped massively into the room. It was one of the largest dogs

that I had ever seen and it seemed to me to have something of a Borzoi about it, although there was a good deal of alien, Western blood. I saw at a glance that it was one of nature's comedians with shaggy ends of hair falling across its eyes, and ears that stuck up as if it were listening in permanently delighted surprise to a rich orchestration of rare sounds—that was my first impression at least. I realize now that had I looked closer I would have detected the peeping malignity behind those shaggy brows. It was a young animal, just about fully grown but still at the stage when it was taken unawares by unexpected, independent activity in its limbs.

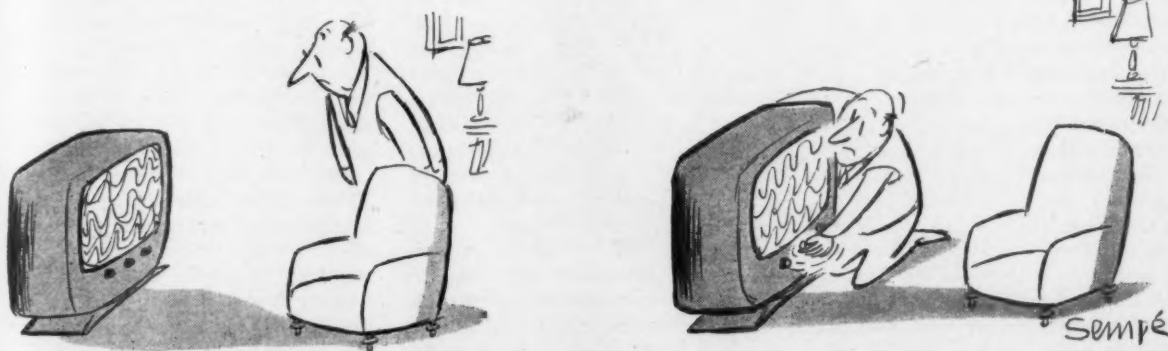
It pulled up sharply when it saw me, then approached, proprietary and suspicious and just a little anxious, padding forward on huge paws. It stopped again about two feet away and gave a qualified, introductory growl, neither friendly nor threatening but prepared to go either way. I was ready by this time to greet even the least influential member of the household as an old friend whom only time and a regretful dalliance in life's byways had prevented me from meeting sooner.

"*Ça va, mon vieux*," I said cordially, flicking ash towards the ashtray. And I held out a tentative hand. Perhaps the accent was wrong or the tone was found too patronizing, I don't know, but he remained motionless, nose slightly elevated, tail stuck out stiffly behind him. For the first time in my life I knew what it was like to be an old mother partridge and to be pointed. I considered him carefully.

"*Tu es gentille, hein?*" It was a Gallic interrogative that I had perfected with no slight effort and it struck me as the most authentically native thing I

could do—except possibly for my indignantly, expostulatory, *Bah oui*, accompanied by a massive shift of the shoulders—if that wouldn't reassure him nothing else I could do would. Fortunately it seemed to work, for with a few wags of the tail he advanced towards the proffered hand, sniffed it for a moment, seemed more than satisfied and took to licking. I was relieved and abandoned my hand to him completely. He started to make playful little snaps at it and I warmed to the game. He was, I felt sure, well able to distinguish between the play situation and reality and I was expecting that at any moment someone would come walking in. What could be more likely to set up an immediate bond of sympathy with any member of the family than to be found on affectionate terms with their dog? I already had half a sentence in my head, "*J'ai déjà fait la connaissance . . .*", and was searching round for an adequate epithet to add a clinching touch of humour. But no one came.

I wondered where the old lady had gone to as I could no longer hear her pottering about in what I thought was the kitchen. I presumed she had at last gone to tell someone that I had arrived. My left hand was growing increasingly sticky and the dog, far from getting tired of alternately licking and gnawing playfully, began to get more excited. Suddenly he decided that it would be more fun on the floor and rolled over on his back, trying to persuade me to join him down there by tugging at my sleeve with his teeth. I declined, however, and shook myself free. In spite of everything I was beginning to feel a little put out. After all, if I was half an hour late that was no





reason to leave me to fight off the dog for half an hour.

I picked up the magazine and opened it with a huffy crackle. I hoped that he would feel snubbed and understand that the game was now over and that we were going to sit down quietly. I waited with the magazine held in front of my face expecting to hear the sound of his retreating footsteps. But there was silence. After a few more moments I allowed my curiosity to get the better of me and slowly lowering the paper peeped over the top. It was a blunder that proved fatal. He was lying flat on his side with one front paw tucked in against his body. He stared up at me with one ear bent forward and his mouth slightly open. His whole body was coiled with the alert expectancy of a spring. As soon as our eyes met, his tail thumped against the floor and he made a swoop for my shoe, assuming that the break was over and we were

now entering the next, more active session. I went back behind the magazine again but he saw that merely as a feint now and continued snuffling at my light-toned suèdes. He finally got the whole shoe in his jaw. I jerked it free, tucking my leg up under me on the chair. He went straight for my other foot. I withdrew that too. Scrambling on to his feet he came on after me into the chair, suddenly wanting to lick my face. My cigarette dropped from my mouth. I tried pushing him off with one hand while I groped for my cigarette with the other, but he was too heavy. Squeezing out from under him I dropped over the side. The cigarette had slipped down into the chair next to the arm.

"*Va, idiot, va,*" I hurled at him, losing my precarious grip on the language in my excitement. Smoke was rising from the chair so I tried stuffing my hand down to get at the cigarette.

The dog was butting me from behind. I burnt the tip of my finger and let out a yell. The cigarette slipped further down into the chair.

"*Va, sacré Borzoi, va. Les jeux sont faits.*"

I looked round wildly. There was no water on the table, but there were two bottles of wine. I looked back at the chair. The volume of smoke was increasing. Suddenly seized with panic, I rushed across and grabbed up one of the bottles of wine and, turning, wrenched out the cork with my teeth. Holding my hand over the top of the bottle I stuffed it head foremost down in the chair and removed my hand. There was a distant hissing as of air running out of a punctured tyre and a valedictory puff of smoke and the panic was over. I noticed that Borzoi was standing to one side wagging his tail and watching my movements with what in a human being might be accurately

described as enthusiastic *Schadenfreude*. I licked at a trickle of wine on my chin and surveyed the contours of the off-white bucket. There were three astonishingly symmetrical circles of plum-coloured Médoc on the seat at the front about the size of half-crowns and a blotchy patch at the back that reminded me of a particularly disfiguring birth-mark. I saw at a glance that nothing short of a skin graft could be done about the birth-mark so I transferred—a cushion from another chair and reconsidered the half-crowns. I looked in my pocket for a handkerchief but I had come out in such a hurry that I was without one. Plunging my hand into my trousers I came up again with a shirt-tail that to a stranger's eye would have appeared curiously mutilated. The crenellated effect, however, had a simple explanation. It was from the tail that my mother, a thrifty soul, invariably carried off her supplies of patches for more exposed sections of my wilting shirts. I had remonstrated at length with her over the practice especially at a time when I was called upon to strip almost daily for a bout of athletic activity in the company of some sixty searching juvenile eyes (counting two for each head). Lately I had given up trying.

I spat on the tail and set to work on the chair. After some five minutes of spitting and rubbing I had to admit that progress was negligible so I sat down on a sheepskin rug on the floor to rethink the situation. I took a swig at the bottle of wine which was little more than half full. I was about to raise the bottle a second time when I felt a humid blast of hot air on the back of my neck, followed by a damp tongue; just above the collar of my shirt, where I was conscious of needing a hair-cut.

"That's enough jokes for one day, joker," I said, getting to my feet, reassured by the masterful sound of my native idiom. The animal seemed impressed, too, for he stopped grinning—there's no other word for it, he was grinning all right—and allowed himself to be dragged across the floor by the long hair of his neck. He had no collar. I got him to the kitchen door and was about to push him through exultantly when I caught sight of a heap of meat lying within easy reach on a table. I stopped thoughtfully. I

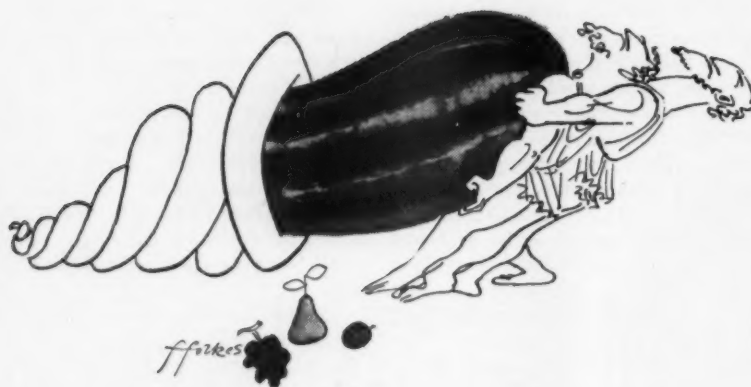
would probably survive the episode with the wine in the family's esteem but should I allow that large hunk of choice steak to be devoured by the dog I would almost certainly alienate irreparably the affections of this one French family. There was nothing for it, we had to co-habit further, my scurrilous canine and I. But the free activity period was at an end as far as I was concerned. Something had to be done about those wine stains and quickly before someone came in and discovered me strolling about in their living room with a tattered shirt-tail hanging out of the front of my trousers. And I was determined that no dog was going to sabotage my chances of a life of ease.

Still holding tight to a handful of loose skin and hair I looked about for a cord of some kind. But there was nothing in sight. Nothing. Then my eyes lighted on the curtain cord. It was stout enough, I thought, measuring it against his neck. I dragged him across to the window and fixed it round his neck. I think he had an idea of my intentions for he tried to resist, but I had a good grip on him and I was firm.

Having disposed of one problem I returned at my leisure to consider how the half-crowns were to be eliminated. Then I had it. Bread, bread and salt. Bread and salt get out ink so why not wine? I transported a large plateful of



"Distress signal be damned, that's my drip-dry shirt."



chunky slices of French bread and the salt-cellar from the table and, sitting down on the floor next to the chair, set to work. I sprinkled the three spots liberally with salt then, spitting on my shirt-tail, rubbed hard. It was with something approaching exultation that I established that there were pinky stains on my tail. Then I turned to the bread, setting to work with a will at breaking off small lumps and rubbing until the lumps had crumbled away beneath my fingers.

I worked my way through half the plateful until the chair and the floor around it were powdered with fine crumbs and there was a small heap of crusts on the sheepskin rug. Progress was slow but I was convinced that it was being made as I sat there humming away to myself, thoroughly absorbed in the work in hand. Then for the second time within half an hour I permitted myself an unguarded gesture that brought disaster in its wake.

In a thoughtless moment as I straightened up from my work I waved with careless bonhomie at Borzoi. He had been showing increasing dissatisfaction with his situation for some time, so, interpreting my nod as a sign that he had returned to favour, he bounded towards me, stopping briefly as he took up the slack in the cord. Resistance was momentary and then he was beside me trailing the whole window-blind in his wake. The coffee table was brushed aside and delicate pink blooms spilled out of splintered faience on to the floor. The bottle of wine rolled over and Médoc flooded across the sheepskin rug.

That as far as I was concerned was that, I decided, getting to my feet and

brushing crumbs from my knees. A rudimentary handyman at the best of times, I recognized that things had now reached such a magnitude that I was quite out of my class. Careless of the consequences I bundled Borzoi out into the kitchen, blind and everything, and donned my coat. I would leave a note saying that I had been called away but that I would explain everything—I reckoned it would take me a week's work but I was younger then and I thought that it might at least be done.

I looked round for writing materials. I had a pen but there had been no ink in it for several weeks past. Short of penetrating drawers which my inherited sense of delicacy prevented me from doing there was nothing to write on or with as far as I could see. I improvised.

Filling my pen from a pool of Médoc '55 I spread out a paper serviette and wrote the following note with a spidery hand:

"Je suis très, très chagriné mais la leçon n'aura pas lieu. Je suis appelé très urgentement. Je vous expliquerai la cause des ravages terribles. C'était la faute du méchant chien. La servante avec la robe noire est disparue dans la cuisine. Je vous prie de croire à ma parfaite considération."

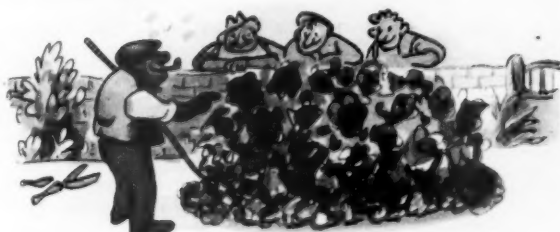
The last sentence I knew was entirely correct. I had copied it from a dictionary once and with it had finished every letter that I have ever written in French. I appended a signature that was satisfactorily illegible and picking up half a dozen cigarettes and a piece of Camembert I left—I felt they were owing to me; after all, I had been invited to lunch. The last things I heard as I stealthily let myself out the front door were whines and scratching sounds coming from the kitchen.

It was about three days afterwards that I received a letter wondering why I had not come to lunch the week before and whether I would be coming the following week. I had, it appeared, got the address wrong. I never went back to the other house to explain what happened—you may call it moral cowardice if you wish and I accept the censure—so I don't know what their reactions were. They probably thought an illiterate half-wit had broken in, deliberately smashed the place up and tried to hang their dog.

The Viennese Shampoo

KANN ich ein Waschen haben, bitter sehr?
Und auch ein Set? Nein danke, nothing mehr.
Kein Friktion, nein, und ob es tut mir leid,
Kein Tinting weder, und auch nicht ein Schneid.
Nein, wirklich nicht, mein Haar is nicht too lang,
Aber ich mögt ein kleine curly Bang
Über mein Forehead haben. Ist zu dick?
Warten Sie bitte, just ein Augenblick,
Als ich in meine dictionary dip
Zu find das Wort für eine Kirbigrip.
Ich wünsch ein wave, ein Welle, haben *da*,
Und *da* ein andere. Das ist wunderbar!
Ja, ich verstehe, zwirn this knorren twice
If meine Drier kommt a bit too heiss.
Ah! *da* ich bin, and though it's not quite ich,
Es ist entzückend und erstaunlich!
Ein tausend thanks, not only bin ich clean,
But auch die schönstest Engländer in Wien.

— VIRGINIA GRAHAM





The scene at London termini at this time of year makes one doubt . . .



. . . whether we are really preparing our young for the infinite variety of adult life.

Musicians from Russia

By CHARLES REID

The Leningrad Symphony Orchestra is playing in London this week

THESE hundred men (a word later about the six girls) from Leningrad are, mostly, smallish, rosy and tough. Off duty they tend to sandals and Army socks. Their suitcases are of a drabness. On the night their white ties are as crisp as deep-freeze edelweiss. Here and there I noted splendid Soviet teeth, minute jigsaws of steel, gold and ivory.

Everybody was friendly, smiling, anxious to be loved. I duly loved.

The Leningrad Symphony Orchestra are staying for their London concerts in an hotel near the Albert Hall. The hotel has telephones but, disquietingly, is not in the telephone book. From the hotel they were motor-coached daily for gramophone recordings in the auditorium that is the pride and nub of Wembley Town Hall. The Town Hall is a system of brick cubes girdled by lawns and flowers. One of the smaller cubes is the Police Mortuary.

On the first morning the Leningrad trombones, led by Akin Kozlov, gathered in the Rose Walk alongside the mortuary to warm and limber up. They brayed nobly in the sunshine. Heads appeared at staff office windows. Ledgers, files, adding machines were abandoned. The town clerk sent out an inquiry. Please couldn't the trombones practise somewhere else?

News had meantime got around that the recording company involved was a German one. A man in differential rents said to a girl in mayor's charities, well, well, what a nice thing to have Germans recording a Russian orchestra during Battle of Britain Week.

The auditorium floor was snaked with cables that ran from the mike booms and under the platform curtains to backroom recording machinery. First business was test play-throughs of Schumann's 'Cello Concerto and Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations*. Rostropovitch ('cellist) and Rozhdestvensky (conductor) wore surprised, mild eyebrows and were Alec Guinness to the life, or as near to life as *The Lavender Hill Mob*. Rostropovitch made a point about phrasing. Rozhdestvensky took

off his spectacles to consider. Rostropovitch repeated his point. "I can understand just as well without my spectacles," warned Rozhdestvensky gently. Rostropovitch, too, had spectacles. He found them good for his metabolism, he said, or somebody said he said. Everybody laughed but Rostropovitch and Rozhdestvensky, who focused their mild surprise on each other and magnified it a bit.

"Roz and Rop," whispered a man with a Greek name and an address in Hamburg, "are the funniest double-act in Soviet music."

The playback was crowded. Outside on the warm asphalt, rank-and-file players, some nursing their instruments, listened through the windows, their eyes reverently glued on Rozhdestvensky. Among the eavesdroppers were certain of the six girl players: Ester, Mura, Ludmilla, Svetlana, Elena and Olga who, in breakaway from Moscow's lady snow-shoveller tradition, play none but lightweight instruments (e.g. violins) or especially elegant ones (harp).

"Impossible," commented the orchestra's chivalrous manager, Afanasi Ponomoryov, "to think of girls playing mannish instruments like the trombone or the double-bass fiddle."

"Not long ago," I objected, "there was a girl trombonist in the Hallé Orchestra. If you go along to the Albert Hall to-night you will see a girl double-bass in the B.B.C. Orchestra at the Proms."

Mr. Ponomoryov thought for a second, then said "Yes, I know it *can* be done. The Queen of Holland was able to unbend a horseshoe with her fists unaided."

Half an hour later I found myself on one of the Town Hall lawns ringed about by questioning, cordial faces. I was a critic? Good. I had heard the orchestra play at the Edinburgh Festival Fine. "Tell us what you think about our playing," clamoured half a dozen voices.

"Starting with the strings," somebody put in.

"Your strings," I replied, "are as cohesive and warm-blooded as those of the Berlin Philharmonic at their best. Which is saying a lot."

Woodwind?

"Uncannily good ensemble, especially in Tchaikovsky quick movements. Here you beat us hollow. But when it comes to woodwind solos, our English players are subtler and more elegant than yours."

Trombones?

"In the first movement of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*, a few pages before the coda, your trombones played their big *fortissimo* descent majestically and terrifyingly. The sound rings in my head still. I doubt whether there has ever been finer trombone playing at any time anywhere . . . As to your other brass, I found the horns accurate enough but odd in timbre. They sound like cousins of the saxophone. And then the trumpets . . . Is Mr. Margolin here? [Veniamin Margolin, the Leningraders' first trumpet, has a triangular, beaming face and hair that is wavy, blond wire. In his free time he is an amateur weight-lifter.] Ah yes, there you are Mr. Margolin. Leningrad trumpet playing is wonderfully fiery. Splendid lung power and control. What many of us couldn't quite reconcile ourselves to was the vibrancy and dither of your octave pedal points in the scherzo-trio of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Didn't sound at all like Beethoven to me."

Mr. Margolin: Perhaps there is some difference between the English ideal of trumpet playing and ours. In Russia we favour tone that has much feeling, much emotion. Have a sweet. (He handed me a small, mint flavoured cylinder, Soviet-made, Soviet wrapped.)

Before the first definitive recording session began, the players strolled cautiously in the purlicues and took photographs of each other against dahlia clumps and the flashier parked motor-cars.





Wish You Were Here

Madrid

AM aggrieved to be turned away from cathedral as "indecently dressed." *Feel* decent: conservative dress on body, closed shoes on feet, unfamiliar mantilla on head. Spanish girl behind me is let in. She has nothing on head, sandals on feet, scruffy skirt, transparent blouse over eye-boggling cleavage. Blouse has filmy sleeves. Mine doesn't.

Bullfight strangely exhilarating. Mate all solicitous, urges that I close eyes. Was prepared to disapprove, did disapprove, but now understand why people go. Got surprising satisfaction out of neat, precise kill. Justify this later by telling husband it is more humane.

Found good hotel in improbable way. As we drove into city, scruffy, unshaven person plucks at car, reaches through window, breathes garlic on baby, hisses confidentially "Need good hotel?" Resisting impulse to recoil and drive on, we let him lead us to office building. We assume he is a legitimate hotel runner, hired by small place that can't afford advertising. He is. He confers with manager, installs us in room, carries bags up, arranges parking place, and is very reluctant to take tip. He explains that he gets cut from managers of hotels he works for. Room is noble, central (near Prado), clean, airy, quiet. We chortle over adjoining private bathroom which boasts tub, shower, sink, bidet. Period. Never mind. — J. F.

The Man Next Door

By PATRICK RYAN

LATELY—perhaps I am approaching the age of discernment—I have found myself noticing other things about women besides their busts and their intellects. And my cloud of misunderstanding has just been pierced by remark of their incarnate belief in the omnipotence of the Man Next Door. This female dogma is, of course, a reflex to their generic mistrust of their own husbands. The prophet without honour in his own land is top of the pops compared with a husband within the four walls of his own mortgage.

This unbelief in the capability of consorts burgeons after marriage when a young wife watches her husband during his apprenticeship as a householder, wielding his first loaded, all-spraying brush, wounding himself in the ear-lobe with his first chisel, and lying with his hand locked two feet down the kitchen-drain while firemen survey him thoughtfully. Women are unable to appreciate that man is a higher animal capable of learning from experience or that the failures of these formative years are but his first steps up the ladder of craftsmanship. And, except for Her Majesty's Opposition, there is nothing quite like a wife for blighting present triumph with recollection of past defeat, for overlooking the grand achievement in relish of the defective detail, and for ignoring the glorious sweep of the newly-papered wall in the satisfaction of pointing out that the pattern is upside-down.

The husband-image thus conjured in the consciousness of growing wives is of a soul-mate cursed with the touch of Chaos by the household gods, foredoomed to burst, break or mentally unhinge any domestic appliance to which he sets tool, a child-figure standing knee-deep in the flood, seeking with one hand to hold back the forces of the Metropolitan Water Board, branding his chin with a soldering-iron held in the other, and swearing, hopelessly, uselessly, endlessly.

Utterly false as this image may be, it accounts for the blind faith of matrons in the Man Next Door. They have never been witness to his blunders and incapacities; for them he holds the mystique of the unknown quantity, the hidden talent of the stranger in town, the first symbolic gesture towards Getting a Man In. While they will fight to the death to prevent their highly efficient husbands from laying a finger on any of their fittings, they will cheerfully stand by while the Man Next Door dismantles their homestead brick by brick.

I write, as always, under the scars of experience, and my daughter and I once mended a leak in a next-door water-pipe with purple modelling clay—it was her outfit—surgical tape and Pinkissimo nail varnish, the wife of the house standing by rapt in admiration while her husband, a master-plumber by trade, looked on in utter despair. He put the best face he could on things afterwards by pretending he'd sprained his thumb. "I could still have done the job all right," he said, "but I left all my tools down at the shop."

And the saddest Superintendent of Parks I ever met had fair cause to be. He grew the biggest floral clock in the North of England, and the best time-keeper, too. He was a chap who thought nothing of laying out botanical Road Safety slogans fifty yards long, or running you up the town coat-of-arms in alyssum, lobelia and French marigolds. And yet his wife wouldn't let him lift a sod or plant a seed in his own front garden. He had to stand by in horticultural hysteria while the Man Next Door, a green-fingered undertaker, supervised his Sheba in filling the place with sunflowers, golden rod and Quaternary nasturtiums.

One of my successful friends from whom I borrow money is hailed in the industry as the greatest living expert on the diseases of gas-stoves. Before he came into the business, all anybody had



"Poor Christine's hair simply refuses to remain carefree."

was a looming, cast-iron box, fuming and rusting in a dank corner; practically single-handed, he brought forth the current gas wurlitzer with its blush-peach enamel, silver-gilt piping, eye-level spit and six years to pay. His wife, who takes pride in being a woman, will never trust him to tighten a tap or blow down a jet on her own gas-stove. "You'll break something, I know you will," she says, backing up in defence of her oven as if she had young inside. "Or you'll not be able to get it together again. Like mother's grandfather clock. All back in the case, you said, and I'm still finding bits of it all over the house . . ."

When however, one Sunday morning, the mains pressure drops to a baby's breath, she gaily asks the Man Next Door, a tailor's cutter by profession, to have a look at it and watches happily while he strips her cooker to its underpants and strews its most intimate organs over the kitchen floor. And when he's finished, her faith is not one whit shaken by the fact that, while not a whimper of gas comes through any of the cooking elements, the flame from the pilot-jet is three feet long, yellow as a dragon's breath and roaring like a Roman Candle. And that was the way it stayed till my daughter and I, the neighbourhood minute-men, were called

in and cut it back to size by plugging its orifice with chewing-gum.

But we couldn't, unfortunately, be of any help to Mr. Codling, the electrical engineer, who caught the worst beating of all from the M.N.D. complex. He lived in a big old house with an ancient lighting circuit that was liable to fits. It was in this epileptic condition, he said, when he bought the place, but Mrs. Codling, a natural-born female if ever I saw one, was eaten up with matemistrust and got the idea that he had caused the convulsions. She was convinced that somehow, secretly, while she was off her guard, he had interfered with the natural order of the wiring.

"You never could leave electric things alone, could you?" she'd say whenever the currents acted irresponsibly. "You did something to it before we moved in, I know you did. It was never like this when the last people had the house, that I do know . . ."

She wouldn't even trust him to change a bulb solo, but she was forever inviting the Man Next Door to come in and look at her frantic lamps. He was a greengrocer who had delusions of electrical grandeur. He fancied himself as a second Faraday and was always bursting mad to get at anybody's wiring. Once he got his insulated pliers into Codling's cable, there was no keeping him away from the house. He was in and out so often that everybody in our street thought he was up to the old business with Mrs. C. He was eternally under her floorboards, putting wires in, pulling wires out, fitting little lamps here, radiant panels there, and sowing the skirtings so thickly with power-points that Codling's house became, in

his expert eyes, an all-electric death-trap.

"Going through that front door," he said to me and my daughter, "is tantamount to climbing into the hot seat at Sing-Sing. You touch anything metal and you'll wake up fried."

Things got so that he could never be sure, any night when he came home, whether the crackling in the loft was mice, the house on fire or that greengrocer getting at his conduit. His persecutor was a bachelor and so he couldn't strike back at him through M.N.D. channels. The strain began to wear him down and he took to wearing rubber gloves and galoshes all day and earthing his bald head every five minutes to keep down the static. He finally developed a manic fear of electricity, which didn't help him any in his job, and his psychiatrist told him he'd have to move away. When he did so, he took the capital precaution of buying a house next door to another electrical engineer and they are both now living

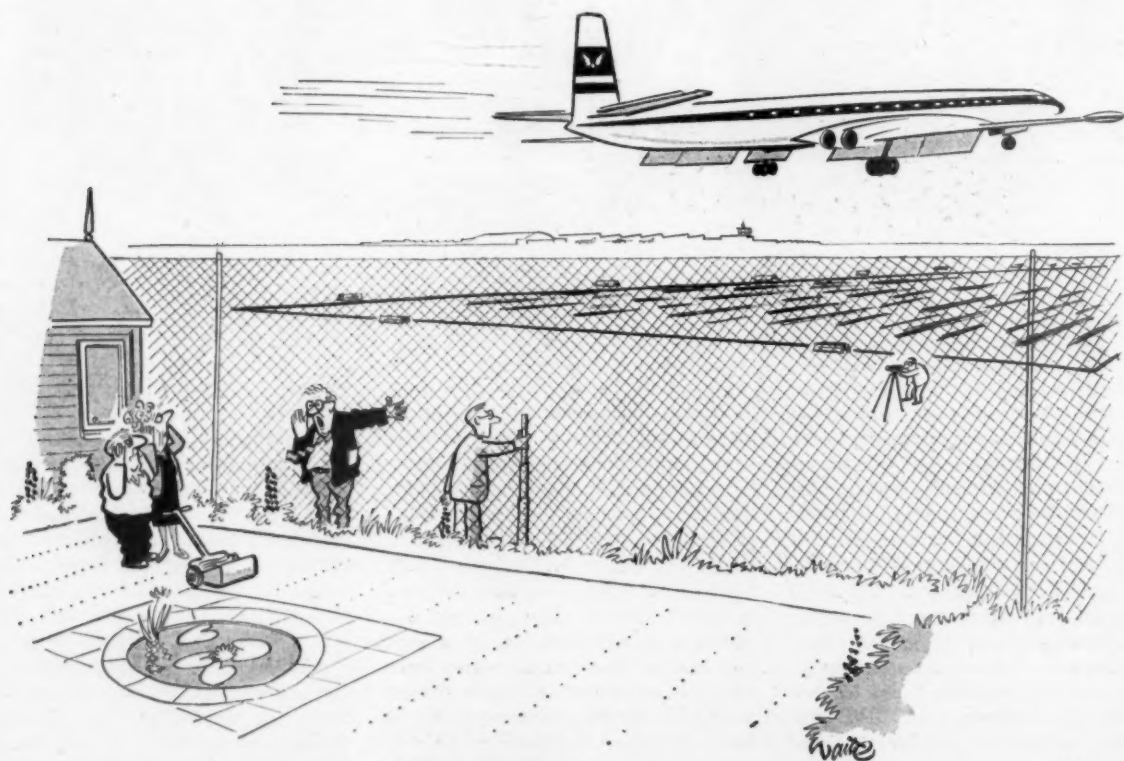
happily ever after, lugging the entrails out of each other's circuits.

It is, undoubtedly, a sad, hard world that wives make for all you competent eager-beaver husbands. But no packet of dried peas is without its silver lining and however depressed and frustrated you may be, whatever dishonour and mistrust may be dished out to you within your own four walls, you may take solace from the thought that to some weird, compulsive woman nearby, you too will always be the Man Next Door.

"Robert Keith Hickman, of no fixed address, against whom there were no previous convictions dated from 1945, was put on probation for two years in Oxford yesterday for stealing a fruit pie and dish and an overcoat from Wadham College on August 4.

Mr. W. G. Wallis, presiding, told him: "You must try to help yourself."

Wadham College dissenting.



"You won't be bothered much longer—we're extending this runway."



The Economics of Rent Control

TO the extreme Left all capitalists are evil, but the evildest is the one who has invested his capital in house property which he then lets out to tenants. The usual conception of the landlord is that of a grasping, heartless wretch who has no compunction about turning widows and orphans into the street.

The truth is more often than not far removed from this popular image. The landlord over the past forty years has been the "mug" among investors. There is probably no type of asset in which investment has yielded less than house property. Forty years of rigorous rent control from which we are now only slowly emerging have given most landlords a return on income smaller than would have been secured on other forms of investment and quite inadequate to maintain his asset in effective repair.

The rent battle is now blazing up again. Tenants have barricaded themselves to resist eviction, deputations of Members of Parliament leave the office of the Minister of Housing "angry and infuriated," those two favourite words of present-day political and industrial disputation.

The mere economist must tread warily in approaching this barbed wired battlefield of rent control. But he should point out that, as compared with the immediate pre-war period, rents in Britain have risen by 48 per cent whereas personal incomes are nearly four times what they were and the prices of house property have risen more than three times. These figures do not indicate any rapacity on the part of landlords who, even had they been so minded, have had their hands well bound by legislation.

Rent control is now being gradually removed but with many safeguards against abuse. One of the most important is the support which is being given to local authorities by the Government for compulsory purchase of property for which allegedly exorbitant rents are being asked.

Looking back on four decades of rent

control the verdict must be adverse. Control has prevented the building of that type of accommodation for which there is the greatest demand. It has condemned reasonable property to the fate of degenerating and crumbling neglected slums because the controlled rent has all too often been quite inadequate to finance the necessary repairs. It has caused old people to control property far too large for their needs but which they could not afford to leave. It has led to the doubling up and trebling up of families with in-laws—and who will calculate the economic costs of these arrangements?

Having said all this and argued the case for moving steadily towards a truly free market in rents, the economist must accept the fact that there are emotional and political issues involved which are likely to prevent a complete derestriction of rents within the next decade.

If, therefore, an investor's fancy turns



Communism in the Back Garden

A CONSIDERABLE social revolution has recently taken place in a West Country town without anybody noticing it. The reason for this smooth transition was that no political ideology was ever mentioned. The change was effected in the name of mutual profit. And it seems that that motive produces the kind of co-operation which contentious polemics never achieve.

The town is a safe Tory seat with an agricultural background. A Socialist has never sat even on the Town Council. But one of the most prosperous streets adopted a measure of communism without protest.

Since the eighteenth century, Mount Royal Gardens has been a street for the professional and pensioned classes. People admired the orderly Georgian façade, uniform but for the different coloured doors. At the back of each house was a narrow garden fifteen yards wide and about fifty in length. A high brick wall divided the gardens, giving each tenant privacy. Some of the gardens were well kept at considerable expense; others were more or less derelict. Each

to thoughts of property he had better cling to those companies which have a relatively small interest in housing property and are more concerned with large scale development such as Mr. Charles Clore's City and Central Investments which has just acquired the Constitutional Club site in Northumberland Avenue. The office block which will ultimately rise there will not be troubled by such pettifogging considerations as Rent Restriction Acts.

There is one other investment conclusion to be drawn from the gradual derestriction of rents: it is that house building is likely to take a new lease of activity before long. The firms which are likely to benefit from this will include Richard Costain, Taylor Woodrow, John Laing, together with London Brick. All of these will help to make up the vast leeway that still remains in providing the new housing held back by rent control.

— LOMBARD LANE

* * *

had its rather untidy tool-shed, its plot for flowers, another for vegetables, and a strip of lawn. One or two had a greenhouse.

But none of the gardens was large enough to be economic for the growing of vegetables or soft fruit; nor was any big enough to contain a tennis court, a swimming pool or even a croquet lawn. One day, one of the occupants, a dentist, suggested to his neighbours that, if they were to co-operate and knock all the dividing walls down, they would have room for a large communal kitchen garden, two tennis courts, flower beds and a really large lawn. He pointed out to them that they could have these amenities for less cost to each householder.

Within a month the Walls of Jericho came down and the tennis nets were up. The whole garden now looks spacious and elegant. The scrappy tool sheds have gone and the value of the houses has improved. The communal idea has had capitalistic advantages. One occupant told me that they were just being "neighbourly," which is, I suppose, as good a substitute for politics as one could get.

— RONALD DUNCAN

☆

Another World Than Ours

"Mrs. Joyce Dunsheath, herself a mountaineer of the Alps and the Himalayas, spoke about her forthcoming 'Abinger-Afghanistan' all-women expedition to the Hindu Kush to climb in little known territory. Slow financial sponsoring and other reasons have reduced the team to herself and Edith Bailey, the pianist."—*Surrey Advertiser*

CRITICISM



AT THE PICTURES

Pickpocket
All the Young Men

SOME people, evidently, are just irritated by the French film *Pickpocket* (Director: Robert Bresson), but I found it oddly pleasing. The only way one can judge anything so utterly individual in style is to estimate how well it succeeds in doing what it seems to have tried to do, and by this standard it isn't quite satisfactory, it has faults. But flawed as it is it seems to me infinitely more interesting and valuable than many an almost perfect success in some more familiar convention.

I'm not thinking only of its documentary interest, though that is considerable. The sharp-eyed may notice among the screen credits the name of a "Conseiller technique pour les gestes des voleurs," and so we may assume that the methods and devices that are here shown being learned, rehearsed and put into practice by the film's central character (and narrator) are in fact among those on which the pickpocket's craft is based. Certainly they look remarkably ingenious and effective, and it's easily possible to understand the fascination that drives the young man on after his first theft from a woman's handbag at a race-

course. What does not come over so well is his character as a whole, the exploration of which was, I take it, meant to be positively Dostoevskian.

On the surface, the most striking thing about the whole work is its narrative style, which has a quite exceptional sparseness and—in effect—speed. If an idea or an incident or a situation can be conveyed in a mere momentary flash of a scene, it is, and never mind anyone who wasn't looking or paying attention. Personally I like to pay attention: it's far more satisfying than relaxing and leaving to the film-maker the responsibility of making sure that no matter how dull-witted or inattentive I may be, enough of his meaning will penetrate. The really worth-while kind of "audience participation" is the active use of one's faculties: eyes, ears, understanding (as even a studio audience knows—listen to it delightedly clapping itself for seeing the point of a not immediately obvious joke). What kills enjoyment is over-emphasis, making things too easy.

That the film tries to do too much in its short length (an hour and a quarter) is probably undeniable; and the very individuality of its narrative style may be criticized as a distraction. It isn't really explained why the police inspector who

knows what the young man is up to all the time doesn't pounce sooner. The ending, too, seems almost casual: we are simply shown or given to understand that after years of this kind of thieving Michel (Martin Lassalle) is reformed by the beautiful intense-looking girl (Marika Green) who cared for his mother before her death. Nevertheless in spite of all these objections, and others, I found the picture extraordinarily interesting, and I'm still thinking about it.

I write about *All the Young Men* (Director: Hall Bartlett) partly because this is a very thin week and partly because it offers a peg for discussion and inquiry. (In the other two films press-shown I could find not even that amount of interest.) Briefly: why are such pictures made? It's hard to understand that any people should be expected to enjoy them—I mean *enjoy* them. And yet, like this example, they are made, written, played, directed with considerable skill and craft; they don't deserve mere abuse. There are even touches of imagination in the details. But the whole thing is—it's the only word—*dull*: this account of a small group of men trying to hold a Korean farmhouse against odds in 1950 evokes in us almost no emotional concern whatever. (What might have made an episode of real suspense, the rescue from the ice-ridge, comes in the first fifteen minutes without enough preparation to give it any grip.) The men are all type-figures, personifications of familiar qualities—except Mort Sahl, who is allowed one or two scenes almost to himself in which, "to keep up morale," he makes the sort of remarks about the army that he is now known for making about politicians. He, by the way, is the only one to show signs of needing a shave during the siege; all the others remain impeccably turned out (Alan Ladd's make-up man even gets into the credit titles). There are clichés on every side, from serious dialogue down to small change (relieved sentry's greeting: "Man, am I glad to see you!"). The Negro sergeant (Sidney Poitier) gives blood for a transfusion to the white ex-sergeant he supplanted (Mr. Ladd), the bitterest racist (of course) has to hold the tube between them, and even then one feels no particular tension. It's just a bread-and-butter movie, something to keep the screen occupied.

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)
Outstanding among the new ones is *Jazz on a Summer's Day*—more of this next week. Also worth notice in London: *Il Tetto* (24/8/60), *Black Orpheus* (8/6/60),



Serjeant Towler—SIDNEY POITIER

[*All the Young Men*]
Ex-Serjeant Kincaid—ALAN LADD

Corporal Crane—MORT SAHL

The Fugitive Kind (14/9/60), *Let's Make Love* (7/9/60) and *Ocean's Eleven* (7/9/60).

Let's Make Love (120 mins.) is also among the releases, and the most enjoyable. *Three Moves to Freedom* (14/9/60—104 mins.) is nothing special, but its strong central idea carries it.

— RICHARD MALLETT

AT THE PLAY

Billy Liar (CAMBRIDGE)

The Happy Haven (ROYAL COURT)

WHEN the curtain went up on *Billy Liar*, which Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall have adapted from the best-selling novel by Mr. Waterhouse, my heart sank, for I have been conditioned over the past few years to believe that a sitting-room in a North country industrial town spells rugged social realism of a John Bratby calibre, with an unwanted baby, at least yellow and probably black, thrown in for good measure. But once again I was to learn how foolish are any preconceived notions in the theatre; within five minutes I was adding to the gale of laughter whipped up by a first act as unexpected as it was funny.

After that, admittedly, the play began to go downhill. Slabs from the novel appeared to have got jumbled in the text; at the end of the second act the grandmother suddenly died, which seemed too harsh in so light a context; and as the evening wore on I grew more and more inclined to throttle the father, whose only adjective, "bloody," was wearing my nerves thin. But the gradual eclipse of the play as a play scarcely mattered, for we realized it was serving as a vehicle for one of the most dazzling pieces of character-acting we have seen for a long time.

Up to then I had known Albert Finney, both at the Birmingham Rep. and at Stratford, mainly in Shakespeare, and though I thought of him as a steady young classical actor of considerable promise I had not the least idea of his talent for eccentric pathetic comedy. In this play he is the only child of a conventional couple, Mona Washbourne and George A. Cooper; if Arnold Bennett had had the idea of Walter Mitty before Thurber and put him in Salford, Billy would be the boy. He's bone-idle, it hurts him to tell the truth, he nicks the petty cash, he is impossible at home and he gets engaged to three girls at the same time, but he isn't by any means a ted; he is just an ordinary undertaker's assistant who longs for the larger life and longs for it so passionately that at the drop of a hat he is off, living his dreams in a mad world most of whose inhabitants have had their legs amputated above the knee. Of this unattractive delinquent Mr. Finney makes an extraordinarily complete character—shambling, cunning, cowardly yet childishly eager. On the surface he is brilliantly funny. When in the third act the play makes one of its drastic changes of gear and he comes out into the garden in moonlight to entertain us with a series of



Billy Fisher—ALBERT FINNEY

[*Billy Liar*]

quite irrelevant turns that melt into one another with happy lunacy and include the Last Post played for the dead grandmother upstairs, Mr. Finney's comic originality is of a high order. But what makes this performance so memorable is that as well it gets right inside Billy to suggest all his pathetic mixed-upness.

Miss Washbourne is the kind of fussy, acid mother he could easily have had, Ethel Griffies, back from a long stay in the States, is a tart North country grandmother, and Ann Beach, Juliet Cooke and Jennifer Jayne are the three contrasted facets of Billy's very unsatisfactory love-life. The production, full of good business, is by Lindsay Anderson.

The Happy Haven, by John Arden, might have seemed a very smart play when I was young and Expressionist antics were fairly new, but now it appears desperately old-fashioned and not a little pretentious. In an attempt to cover this, one imagines, all its characters but one wear masks—

amusing masks, by Michael Ackland, but without any reason that I could see. The play proceeds at a snail's-pace, made slower by the Brechtian doggerel songs dotted freely about the script. A cockney doctor who runs a home for old people discovers an elixir of life, and just as he is about to administer it to his patients in front of some distinguished visitors the old people, who have decided among themselves that they are far happier being old, give the unhappy man an injection himself and he comes back as a boy in shorts carrying a teddy-bear. It is a novel twist, I suppose, in an elixir play to find characters unwilling to be given back their youth, but somehow it is not very effective. If one wants to pursue a moral one can find it tenuously in scientific selfishness properly rewarded; but I felt the play would have to carry a lot more wit and point to deserve to be taken so seriously. One of the drawbacks of using masks is that it makes it hard to judge the acting. Rachel Roberts and Barrie Ingham seemed to me the most telling of the home's inmates, and Peter Bowles, allowed to keep his own face, makes a spirited rogue of the doctor.

Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)
A Passage to India (Comedy—27/4/60), brilliant adaptation of E. M. Forster's novel. *A Man for All Seasons* (Globe—13/7/60), Paul Scofield as Sir Thomas More. *The Caretaker* (Duchess—11/5/60), Pinter and Pleasence.

— ERIC KEOWN

REP. SELECTION

Guildford Rep., *One Way Pendulum*, until September 24th.
 Civic, Chesterfield, *Five Finger Exercise*, until September 24th.
 Playhouse, Nottingham, *A Cry of Players*, until October 1st.
 Castle, Farnham, *A Clean Kill*, until September 24th.

IN THE GROOVE

The Price of Progress

HIGH fidelity sound reproduction must certainly go on the credit side of the ledger, with radar and instant coffee, when the scientific inventions of the twentieth century are finally being assessed. It is admirable in itself, just as long-playing records and tapes are admirable. But the L.P. has had occasional harmful effects; the short-playing 78s imposed a discipline; 33s and tapes have commendably liberalized the art of recording jazz, allowing opportunities to explore its various possibilities; however, the less creative musicians, the majority, unfortunately seem to think that improvisation is merely a vague meandering away from the melody, and the more time they are given the more remotely they wander, often with tiresome results. Hi-fi, by accurately reproducing the entire range of audible sound vibrations, presents extended opportunities and temptations. When hi-fi was a new toy the fanatics were excited by having railway engines roaring through their drawing rooms, nightingales singing, waves breaking and other demonstrations of hi-fi's versatility and realism; and all this experimental playing about with sound for its own sake influenced some jazz, most notably and lamentably encouraging a lot of drummers to exceed the proper bounds of percussion. You know: suddenly the tom-toms thudded more, the cymbals sizzled more crisply, and there were a lot of different bits and pieces of wood and metal being knocked and rattled all over the place in the name of Afro-Cuban rhythms. Every week for a while another band offered "a new sound." The only surprise was that nobody arranged a jazz concerto for a massed chorus of bagpipes and referees' whistles. The price for technical progress sometimes seemed inordinately high.

This type of abuse of the medium came to mind the other day, as the seasonal dearth of major releases seemed to be coming to its very welcome end. "Satin Brass," by the George Shearing Quintet with Brass Choir (Capitol T-1326) overwhelms the admirably subtle swing of the

familiar piano, vibes, guitar, bass and drums with the screaming blast of four trumpets, four trombones, two French horns and a tuba. It was heart-rending to hear that sedate piano picking its way between all the avalanches of crashing metal. It was a relief to turn back to "Beauty and The Beat!" (Capitol T-1219), the wonderful record he made with Peggy Lee in Miami last year.

One suspects that something like a stunt is being attempted also in "The Eddie 'Lockjaw' Davis Cookbook" (Esquire 32-104), which has little to commend it other than the leader's picturesque nickname. The ensemble includes Jerome Richardson, doubling on tenor saxophone and flute, and Shirley Scott, on an electric organ that produces music like molten marshmallow. Esquire have redeemed themselves, however, by issuing "Hawk Eyes," by the Coleman Hawkins Sextet (Esquire 32-102), which would be worth having if only for one track alone, a slow blues called "C'mon In." Hawkins in middle age anomalously has gained vigour and passion. The record also features some fine trumpet, muted and unmuted, by Charlie Shavers.

There seems to be a lot of powerful saxophone about just now. Benny Golson, tenor sax, dominates his quintet in "Groovin' with Golson" (Esquire 32-105). But the most interestingly intricate musicianship on the instrument on a new record is the duet, not to say duel, in "Gerry Mulligan meets Ben Webster" (H.M.V. CLP-1373). The contrast between Mulligan's honking baritone and Webster's soft and breathy tenor is most attractive, and these men always seem to be thinking while they play.

Other recent releases worth hearing included Duke Ellington's music from the soundtrack of the motion picture *Anatomy of a Murder* (Philips SBBL-514), and, if you like the more traditional Chicago and New Orleans styles, Eddie Condon and his All-Stars, in the Philips Jazz Gallery (Philips BBE-12365), and "That's a Plenty," Wilbur de Paris (London LTZ-K-15192). Wild Bill Davison's cornet solo in "Ol' Man River," on the Condon record, is particularly ingenious and amusing.

—PATRICK SKENE CATLING

ON THE AIR

Sykes Ill-served

AMONG my outstanding memories of a comic television is that of Eric Sykes as the single-minded producer battling hopefully against continual stage catastrophe, and it is therefore the sadder to record that his present BBC series has been disappointing. It was cheering when "Sykes and the Good Deed" opened in happy style with his fisherman hooking a launch and being towed down-river like an earnest, flat-capped crocodile. But once the story moved back to his cheerless house, the old spark died. I sensed, when he dressed up in night-shirt, bed-jacket and striped Russian sleeping-boots that we were going to work hard for our laughs and

desperation peeped through as he forced a framed text over his head. The BBC muster for this show one of the most risible audiences since Burns and Allen but even these stoic whoopers were worn to silence when his bed kept tipping up and tumbling him out.

I do hope things improve but I am not sure they will so long as the series is restricted to the present format. Each week we have the same triangle of the star, Hattie Jacques as his sister, and Richard Wattis as the unpleasant chap next door; and these two excellent performers are given little to do but express exasperation and superciliousness respectively. The story-line of snob-conflict is a little tired, the humour is basically domestic and the action is largely limited to the house.

I doubt if this formula is well-suited to the individual talents of Eric Sykes. He is not the commanding type of comedian who generates laughter from his own personality; the wistful humour of his pixilated, Buster Keaton character would display to best effect against a *Modern Times* background compounded of such elements as mechanical adversity, mass production and the pompous complexity of officialdom. There is much of Jacques Tati about his stiff-legged, eager-to-please droll and "Mon Oncle" in the plastic hose factory comes near, in my mind, to the true world of Eric Sykes. A picaresque series, releasing him from his present suburban confines might be the thing—Sykes in the cold, cold, world: demonstrating intractable domestic gadgets to unimpressed women . . . ruining the career of a business efficiency expert . . . or plugging a demented detergent to suspicious Scots shopkeepers.

I had the good fortune to catch "You're Invited" (Granada), billed as an intimate half-hour of comedy and music, and found it most pleasing entertainment. Produced by David Main, it had the unusual virtue, in the variety field, of simplicity, merely presenting three artists of quality and allowing them to follow their professions. Jonathan Winters offered satirical comedy of a high order, Sylvia Sands put over her songs with easy charm and Evalyn Tyner played the piano crisply and colourfully. The backing trio was cool, the settings unobtrusive and the whole affair had a style admirably suited to its intent. Jonathan Winters is an extremely adventurous humorist and I would gladly see his *Modern Musical* impression again.

In contrast, the last two portions of "Hi, Summer!" (BBC) slipped in quality. The material was very thin on the ground and much musical prancing was resorted to by all concerned. The sets were gimmicked up like a sultan's dream, dancers sang, singers danced and brilliant actors did both.

—PATRICK RYAN

PUNCH EXHIBITIONS

"Punch in the Cinema." Gaumont, Sheffield.

"Punch in the Theatre." Opera House, Scarborough.



AH

BOOKING OFFICE

TO BE AN ENGLISHMAN

By R. G. G. PRICE

The Making of an Englishman. Fred Uhlman. *Gollancz*, 25/-

Sowing: Autobiography 1880-1904. Leonard Woolf. *Hogarth Press*, 21/-

MR. UHLMAN is unexpected and Mr. Woolf disappointing. The painter turns out to have had a wildly varied career which has included duels in a German university, a flirtation with dentistry, some years of practice in the law, running a tropical fish business in Paris, being the unwelcome son-in-law of Sir Henry Page Croft, internment in the Isle of Man and cottage life in an Essex village. He tells the story with exuberance and subtlety and throws light on our times from an odd angle. One of the many surprising things in it is that Mr. Uhlman was given materials by an artist friend when working in Paris and found he could paint. After he mentions this episode, one among so many, he simply takes his painting for granted. What he really wants to talk about is transferring his roots from a Württemberg Jewish family to England, though his English life occupies comparatively little space.

He feels a deep gratitude for the gentleness of English society but he is worried by our lack of curiosity about the arts and the low intellectual pressure. He suggests that his readiness to relish the sense of safety and not regret too much the slugginess that goes with it may be a sign of middle-age. But he does not seem to recognize that in the stresses of a German environment he did not paint. In the greater security of Paris he began and in the combined safety and comfort of England his talent flowered. He may not realize that he is arguing on the same side as the people who say that poverty produces quality, that artists and scientists work better under pressure of fear and that where the ground is firm underfoot men do not run. The efflorescence of English culture which has marked Mr. Uhlman's lifetime has been associated with a general tendency towards a rising standard of living and a reduction of such threats to the individual as drunkenness in the streets, mob-rule and parental violence.

Mr. Woolf was also born into a Jewish family and, like Mr. Uhlman, had a violent father, though he died when Mr. Woolf was quite young. Money was sometimes short but life presented few serious threats, either at St. Paul's or at Cambridge. Antisemitism never affected him too much. He had a hot tongue and as well as being good at his work was good at games.

One had hoped he would add to the recent accounts of the group that later became "Bloomsbury" a picture from a new direction, so that we should see them through alert, half-foreign eyes. Instead, although providing much that may be useful to biographers, he drowns the individuality of his friends in vague gush about how wonderful everybody was. With its accounts of exuberant family meals in country houses and excited intellectual arguments in which the issues are never made clear and in precise references to voluminous reading the book is a little like Margot Asquith's *Autobiography*. Mr. Woolf keeps saying how intelligent he was and it is obviously true that he had a quick

PRESENTING THE CRITICS



25—ALAN PRYCE JONES

Books

grasp of the fallacies in a theory of ethics or a treatise on politics. Why, then, has he not preserved for us the intellectual configuration of his friends, who included men like Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, Keynes and Mr. Forster, even if some of the swans did turn out to be ducklings?

I suspect the answer is that he suffered from one of the traditional failings of the Jewish mind, over-abstractness, without having the compensating failing, over-ready emotional response to surfaces. He never put himself into the kind of alertly passive relationship with his environment that produced Mr. Uhlman's pictures and gives his recollections their urgency. Perhaps during his marriage with Virginia Woolf he tried to balance her sensitivity to impressions by an exaggerated pursuit of the generalized. This might explain the rather colourless style that so neutralizes the humane arguments of his political journalism.

NEW NOVELS

Imperial Caesar. Rex Warner. *Collins*, 18/-

The Shorn Lamb. John Stroud. *Longmans*, 16/-

The Letter in a Taxi. Louise de Vilmorin. *Collins*, 10/6

Death of a Vulpicide. J. K. Stanford. *Faber*, 13/6

To bring Caesar so fully to life in a fictional biography that we cease to be aware he is not the author is a remarkable feat. In *Imperial Caesar* Rex Warner covers the period from 58 B.C. to the morning of the assassination; it includes the conquest of Gaul and Britain, the Civil War, Egypt and Cleopatra. The account of the campaigns is extremely vivid, the impression of supreme ability overwhelming. Caesar emerges as a politician first, a general afterwards; though most of the time far from Rome, he keeps constantly in touch through an excellent intelligence service with the latest shifts in the balance of power. He is an icy realist, who may weep at Achilles' tomb but is prepared to sacrifice his own wife as a pawn in the political game. Even his most bestial barbarities are coldly calculated for their public effect. Like most great men of action, he imagines himself infinitely lovable. But his mind, after all, had the power to shape half the world, and Mr. Warner's reconstruction of it is masterly. This novel is a fascinating study of the motives and self-deceptions of an unusually intelligent dictator, that makes Caesar seem almost a modern, as in fact he was.

The Shorn Lamb is a series of accomplished light articles, only just held together by the thread of a serious theme. As a novel it therefore fails,

but as an entertaining document about the Welfare State it scores high marks. Its author, John Stroud, has worked in the Child Care Service, and this book is obviously the fruit of his early ideals and disillusionments. Starry-eyed and braced by psychological dogma, his hero goes straight into the thick of social work, and finds it not at all as he had expected. Quickly submerged in alarming problem cases, he discovers to his horror that compromise and even cynicism can be valuable allies in the face of sloth, dishonesty and official incomprehension; not until his hopes have been almost worn away by disappointment does he begin to realize how much his small successes mean to him, and in particular the rescue of Egbert Crump. Mr. Stroud is a lively humorist writing with enormous sympathy of people he knows and understands; his novel is the most reasonable explanation of the teddy boy phenomenon I have yet read.

Louise de Vilmorin has the knack of reducing to a series of mocking formulas the lives of her well-to-do characters, whose fluttering hearts are the only disturbance to be heard in her long short stories. *The Letter in a Taxi* is a very moral little tale, told with charming artificiality, of the devoted wife of a very dull man who is forced into a cascade of lies simply because she has lost a silly letter which is retrieved by a man of eccentric determination. Mlle. de Vilmorin writes subtly, with an elegant wit. She is well translated by Francis Wyndham, but I don't think the drawings earn their keep.

A must for the bow-legged, *Death of a Vulpicide* will also appeal to the connoisseur of disappearing types. It is about an M.F.H. who is his own huntsman and a dedicated individualist who believes hunting is for killing foxes and not for brightening the glossy magazines. Polite to people in inverse ratio to their importance, he is an awkward customer, but he has tremendous drive and is technically a wizard. Since this short novel is by J. K. ("Guns Wanted") Stanford some of the adventures are very funny. Effective satire is equally divided between hunting snobbery and the Cruel Sports fanatics, and the dialect comes steaming from the stables. —ERIC KEOWN



"If the Strontium ninety bothers you I don't mind drinking yours."

IT'S A WIDE WORLD

A Visit to Don Otavio. Sybille Bedford. Collins, 16/-

To those countries of the mind into which the best travel books take us, Mrs. Bedford has added a Mexico uniquely hers. She shows us the anciently savage beauty, dabbled by today's barbarity, as we expect. With what subtlety of detail and perception of character she conjures the sense of a magic world at all points touching the real. Don Otavio, a man with manners damascened on the blade of his character is the central figure, one surrounded with others, subordinated but as real as the two Indian boys "tireless and headstrong like a pair of young mules." Her style is Churchillianly pithy: "Never before has so much housework been done by so many so badly." Her description of landscape is austere, or humming-bird-jewelled, whichever is proper. Even today's barbarism she makes tolerable with "Don Quixote in a bank and the Marx Brothers in the post-office." It is a Mexico to which her readers will return often.

It is only fair to point out that the book was published a year or so ago under another name, *The Sudden View*.

— R. C. SCRIVEN

The City. Paul Ferris. Gollancz, 21/-

What really goes on in the City? The denizens themselves maintain that the Stock Exchange with its radial trappings contains the true heart of Britain, the pulsating organ of industrial and financial life. It is a national institution, the powerhouse of British probity, near-perfect, inviolable, shamefully misunderstood but ruggedly independent in matters of party politics. The wilder critics of the City regard it as a closed shop for the privileged and moneyed, an anachronism in an age of State control, a jungle of dog-eat-dog rapaciousness and dishonesty, and a cornerstone of Tory dominance. Mr. Ferris, in this searching analysis, is above all fair and balanced. This account of the day-by-day work of the City will certainly shock the die-hards with its revelations of red-tape, inefficiency and nepotism; but it will also displease those who campaign for nationalization and wholesale demolition. It is a gay book, lucid and deliciously provoking. *Dictum meum pactum.*

— BERNARD HOLLOWOOD

Marriage East and West. David and Vera Mace. MacGibbon and Kee, 30/-

Woman, so goes a Japanese saying, is man-made, but in this case the creation excels its creator. So far, so good. But what is woman worth? Is it 10,000 rupees and a radio (this was the dowry one Indian suitor was offered)? Is it 8,000 rupees, a phonograph and a platinum watch? Is it an offer to pay all costs for four years to study in England? And again, what is it like to be a child wife, or to have a polygamous husband? All things considered, is it really better to ignore the marriage rites and

become Imperial Concubine of the second rank, with a sovereign's escort of eunuchs when you go home at week-ends to mother? These are just a few of the questions raised and answered in this entertaining survey. "We wish this book to be judged," write its authors, "not as a work of scholarship, but as an impressionistic picture painted on a very broad canvas." *Marriage East and West* is in fact a careful survey, based on a hundred books and four separate visits to Asia; and while it is not a Kinsey or Wolfenden Report, or an anthology of love in hot and cold climates, it certainly has the elements of all three. It is an impressionistic canvas with a good deal of colour about it.

— JOANNA RICHARDSON

SEVENTY NOT OUT

Look Back and Laugh. A. P. Herbert. Methuen, 16/-

This is A.P.H.'s seventieth book, published on his seventieth birthday, and celebrating incidentally fifty years' contributing to *Punch*. Who could possibly be critical of A.P.H.? It is enough for his uncountable adherents to say that the book contains ninety-six contributions dating from 1910 to 1960, that they include the first war, and Topsy, and Mr. Mafferty, and some Parliamentary speeches, and the second war, and some lyrics from the theatre, and "From the Chinese," and the only really funny bit ever to have been written about the vagaries of the typewriter keyboard, and . . . well, it contains 250-odd pages of essence of Herbert, and all his uncountable adherents ought to have a copy on their shelves, besides getting an extra copy to give to someone who is not yet an adherent but will be after reading this book.

— B. A. YOUNG

RELATIVITY

Married to Tolstoy. Cynthia Asquith. Hutchinson, 30/-

Among the wives of geniuses Countess Tolstoy has usually had rather rough sledding, with her aged husband's flight from her, only to find to his deathbed, outweighing the happiness which he himself admitted they often found together. In her last book the late Lady Cynthia Asquith has endeavoured to redress the balance, but she was sufficiently fair-minded to admit that once the young gay girl, who was the model for Natasha Rostov, had vanished Countess Tolstoy was humourless and hysterical. Few worse emotional tortures can ever have been devised than the Tolstoy's practice of writing their diaries for each other to read; indeed his wife claimed that she had never recovered from the shock of reading in his the account of his early debaucheries. Jealous, perpetually pregnant, and bearing the burdens of Tolstoy's business affairs, when the philosophy he had evolved forbade him to attend to them himself, she fought on with tremendous vitality. For years she battled against the influence of the disciple Chertkov, whom she rightly

suspected not only of being a candid snapshotter but a snapper-up of unconsidered conversational trifles. At the end there was no peace and it was only when Leo Tolstoy had been dragged into unconsciousness that his wife was allowed near his deathbed.

—VIOLET POWELL

Napoleon's Son. André Castelot. Translated by Robert Baldick. *Hamish Hamilton*, 30/-

At ten o'clock on March 20, 1811, Stendhal was woken up by a hundred and one cannon. The King of Rome had been born, the heir to an empire stretching from Hamburg to Naples, from Warsaw to Brest. Even his father envied him, "for glory awaits him. . . . To take hold of the world, he will only have to stretch out his hands." Glory did not await him long, for *l'Aiglon* became a pawn in Napoleon's final struggle with the Allies, and a virtual prisoner in Vienna. But though his name had been changed, and though they had tried to turn him into a German-speaking archduke, he knew the truth and resolved to become a great man. He died, French in spirit, of tuberculosis, at the age of twenty-one. In 1940 his body was brought back to Paris to lie with that of his father.

The discovery of the Marie-Louise archives, and the publication of her correspondence with Napoleon have now, at last, made it possible to write a complete life of *l'Aiglon*. M. Castelot has written a masterly study. It is documented enough to satisfy the most rigorous teacher at the *Ecole Normale*, and it is written with style and zest and humour; the translation, by Dr. Robert Baldick, is impeccable.

—JOANNA RICHARDSON

SF IN DECLINE

Trouble with Lichen. John Wyndham. *Michael Joseph*, 13/6

Moonlight Red. Dighton Morel. *Secker and Warburg*, 16/-

Publishers are shy of science-fiction nowadays, which is perhaps why good SF writers are stressing fiction at the expense of science. In *Trouble with Lichen* the creator of the triffids and the Midwich Cuckoos invents a drug to prolong life and does no more with it than incorporate it in a rather ordinary social tangle, unmercifully padded out with curiously unobservant parodies of newspaper reports and other expedients. (When did he ever see a paragraph in a popular Sunday paper eighteen lines long?)

Moonlight Red begins promisingly with a new kind of 'flu epidemic which turns its victims into raging lunatics; but almost as soon as the intrepid colonel commanding the local military garrison has established his stronghold for the sane minority to occupy against the mad majority, we are sidetracked into a story about a battle with a band of religious teddy-boys, rpt. religious teddy-boys, who have gone mad

in a different way. The colonel is killed in a pitched battle—and the world is left in a highly unresolved condition without a hint of the future course of events.

Did the science-fictionists give in because the publishers withdrew their interest? Or have the publishers given in because the science-fictionists are writing like this?

—FREDERICK FLANAGAN

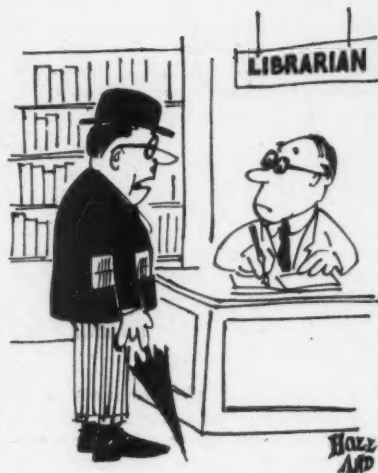
BLOOD COUNT

The Man from Nowhere. Joan Fleming. *Crime Club*, 10/6. Stranger, tall, likeable and golden-voiced but disfigured by a hideous naevus, arrives to look for work in village that might be Llaregyb except for not being explicitly Welsh. He becomes, by being appreciably less hopeless than his neighbours, a figure in the community, until an old woman is found robbed and murdered, and the village feels that none of them can have done it. Not much happens, to be honest, apart from two deaths, but the book is a pleasure to read—lively, controlled, amused and amusing.

Assault on a Queen. Jack Finney. *Eyre & Spottiswoode*, 13/6. Ramshackle group of adventurers raises U-boat scuttled in World War I, and uses this rust-eaten cockle-shell for piratical attack on *Queen Mary*. Done like a film but most enjoyable, especially the first half which is full of the technical problems of raising and refitting the sub on a shoestring and vividly suggests the atmosphere of grown men working on a project that is half hobby, half earnest and only accidentally illegal.

Perhaps I Look Simple. R. B. Amos. *Longmans*, 13/6. Rugger-playing narrator tangles successfully, if mainly by luck, with London underworld group intriguing over succession to rich Arab oil sheikdom. Good fun but a bit more than that, for the narrator, though tough as a crowbar and fairly intelligent, is almost helpless in the currents of crime, which is how it would be. The cover is as good as the title.

The Schulz Money. Malcolm Gair. *Collins*, 10/6. An engaging romp with a completely-in-control detective investigating modern Tichborne case. Really no



"Have you got a book on surtax for beginners?"

more than a civilized scamper round Europe with a few hair-breadth escapes and a little sex thrown in. Enjoyable, though.

The House in Marsh Road. Laurence Meynell. *Collins*, 10/6. Wife inherits house containing amiable poltergeist; husband tries to do away with her to sell house; poltergeist foils the villain, in the end fatally. Sounds like nonsense, but the husband, a clever, spineless, lying writer who is beginning to slip, is excellently done, and the rest is elegant.

The Dark Places. Alex Fraser. *Bles*, 13/6. Half-alcoholic ex-barrister, interested in astronomy, becomes involved with family of clever old eccentric scientist living in same coastal village, provides evidence that yachting accident to local blackmailer was really murder, and finally returns triumphantly to the courts to clear the innocent. Solution of old-fashioned complexity, but characters creditably solid.

—PETER DICKINSON



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BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

FOR WOMEN



Bedside Story

"I F ever I am called to see a pretty woman in an ultra-feminine bedroom," said the doctor, "I am immediately on my guard. All those frills indicate arrested development, so I don't believe a word she says. She hasn't outgrown her childhood and works on the pleasure principle all the time. Feigning illness to get her own way is just one of her many foibles, but her dutiful husband never sees through her doll's house deceit.

"A fondness for pink is infantile too, and I assess a patient's immaturity in proportion to the amount of the colour used. The more pink, the more childish she will be. Yet just a few touches of pink mean gaiety and the ability to flirt—nice for the husband and good for marriage.

"The bedroom that makes me wonder is the one bought by the book. Light, expensive wood, streamlined units accompanied by lilac-coloured carpet and candlewick bedspread, these suggest a couple always anxious to do the right thing. Essentially nice people, but afraid to express their own personalities. They live by the printed word and have few ideas out of the rut. Pressed to make a statement about anything, the most they will venture is 'Well, my paper says . . .

"Their marriage will be uneventful and long lasting. They haven't the imagination for infidelity!

"Dark oak often goes with a warm-hearted woman, and if the furniture is antique into the bargain, you can be fairly sure that her marriage has many outstanding qualities. Where the soft furnishings are green she will prove to be an ardent nature-lover and keen outdoors type, whereas dark oak and blue seem to belong to the dreamier, spiritual ones. Either way, they make loving, first-rate wives and sensible mothers.

"To-day, of course, I often come up against what my younger patients call 'contemporary.' This is a simple breaking away from the parental influence

and is quite in keeping with the experimental stage of marriage. Their furnishings seem exciting and daringly different, and these patients have plenty to say about everything. They are uninhibited, yet easily persuaded; are good company and nothing seems to get them down. They like to be told about their illnesses without reservation; no fuddy-duddy phrases or comforting idioms for them.

"Occasionally I am called to see somebody in a room where nothing matches. There may be a large wardrobe bought cheaply because of its unfashionable size; a dressing table of no known vintage and a patchwork cover on the bed with all the squares about a foot across. Here is trouble indeed. The room shouts its lack of romance and background of niggardly cheeseparing. Those who sleep here will have ulcers for certain unless they learn to relax before it's too late. 'Do before you die' should be *their* motto.

"Twin beds always make me sigh. Young couples who sleep alone may find

themselves suffering from much more than cold feet. The solitary sleeper grows cold of heart, mistrustful and afraid of life, and I always tell twin-bedders to try sleeping together for a few weeks before sending for me again. Most of their ailments are trivial anyway, and could be cured by normal night-time companionship. Yes, I'm a great believer in sleep therapy.

"Bedrooms don't really need bright lights. Just a five-watt bulb to prevent toe stubbing is sufficient—and decently kind to our illusions. But one thing is certain, children should be kept out of the parental bedroom. Their hobbies and habits have no place in the parents' love life, so guard that door with a gun if necessary. You'll all be happier when you meet next morning if you keep one room free of motherhood, even if you have to put the children to sleep on the landing.

"Over the years I have found that women seem to react without question when they hear of my furnishing foibles, and many husbands are blessed with an overdrawn bank account in consequence.

"The local shopkeepers welcome me with ever open doors, for they feel that we're all in it together, with profit to us both. I can hardly bear to tell them about my partner who's coming next month. Such a down-to-earth young man. He'll know exactly what is wrong with everybody without so much as a glance around the room, and is probably colour-blind as well.

"It may be that malingering will be much less costly under his ministrations, but it won't be nearly so much fun, nor so popular."

—ELIZABETH RING

A Boxer in the Family

"H OW would you like to travel round the world?" my husband said one day, just like that, as we were sitting on an Australian beach sipping cool lemonade.

It seemed he had thought up a way of working a year or two in England, a year in the United States, and then travelling home.

"Wonderful," my two small daughters and I agreed. "But what about Stacey?"

Stacey is our Boxer dog and we've had her since she was the size of the keg the St. Bernard carries on his mission of mercy. She is immense, flopped and loveable.

"I'm sure she'll be very happy with

the Joneses while we're overseas," my husband said, in that off-hand way he has of referring to animals.

"Leave Stacey behind?" we wailed.

"All right, all right," my husband said, seeing that we were unanimous. "Now I've got *just* the ship." We sat up and listened. "It's from the B & Z line, and it sails on a date that would suit us down to the ground."

"They'll take Stacey?" I said warily.

"Why not?" My husband, who never can see difficulties until they are pointed out to him, looked surprised. "I'll check up to-morrow though."

Sure enough, the ship had no "facilities" for the pets of passengers.

"You have to send your dog separately, by cargo vessel," my husband announced next night at dinner, as if that settled that. We managed to find a ship that would take the whole family, but the sailing date was all wrong. We took it just the same. "I do hope that animal is not going to dictate the course of our lives," my husband said. Not that Stacey was much trouble. Naturally we had to rent a house in England close to the country kennels where she spent her six months quarantine.

"Can't run the risk that she may forget us," father said with heavy humour. "Too bad, that my fares have to be doubled, and I don't get home from the office till eight o'clock." But he is a reasonable man, and he did not protest much.

Now we are facing the trickiest problem of all. According to the master plan the next move is to the United States. But dogs, whatever their virtues, may not enter Australia from that fair land. There is nothing personal in it. The U.S. bat population, it seems, is a carrier of rabies.

If you have ever owned a Boxer you will agree that there are only two courses open. Either Stacey returns home via England, doing another six months quarantine on the way, or we live in the United States indefinitely. As we could never think of letting Stacey pass out of our care for two sea voyages, and one whole quarantine period, the choice is obvious.

I'm sure my husband has never seriously contemplated becoming an American citizen, even in the interest of the family. But then, as I say, he is a reasonable man. —LEILA DUNNETT

The Yak Look

I SEE that the lady who writes the fashion stuff for my Sunday newspaper has described the latest hair style as having a scimitar look. I shall not pass this on to my hairdresser.

Not long ago I said to him, lightly and gaily, "Please do something to my hair. I should like the yak look—the way those models wear it, like a yak?"

He paused, comb aloft, and said disapprovingly, "A yak?"

I said, "Yes. You know how they all go around looking like yaks."

He said, "I don't understand. A yak? Isn't that some kind of animal?"

I said, a bit desperately, "Yes. You know, a yak. A sort of buffalo."

He said, light dawning, "Oh, you mean *bouffant*."

There was no going back now. "Not *bouffant*," I said, "buffalo. I suppose you might call it *bouffant* too, but buffalo is what I meant."

"Buffalo?" He looked really unhappy. "I thought you said something about a yak."

"I did," I said. I had not the heart to continue.

He poised the scissors. "Would you mind telling me how you want me to style your hair?"

I said, "Well, sort of sticking up there and coming down here, and out a bit like this, like a y—I mean, out a bit here."

He began to cut. "I have never heard

of it referred to as the Yak Look," he said coldly and added, snipping angrily, "I have never seen a yak, but I am quite sure that if I turned out women looking like one I should have to give up business." He poked my ear savagely, nearly slicing the lobe.

I said, rallying with feeble defiance, "Yaks are quite attractive. Like bulls. I mean, bulls have lovely curly hair, haven't they?"

I thought he was going to say something, but he merely gave me a hunted look in the mirror and hurried out.

A young lady came in and began to brush my neck. She was wearing her hair in the style I shall always think of as the Yak Look.

—ANNE HUMPHREYS

Keeping-up Note

AS a tough school-mum, dearest, I can bear Your telling me that Parsley-Gores has got A Jag, a father who's a millionaire, Two cine cameras, a horse, the lot . . .

But what *does* get me, has me seeing black,
Is hearing how this wretched Parsley-Gores
Boasts the most super ancient patched-up mac—
Just when I've spent the earth replacing yours.

—ANGELA MILNE



"Do you mind if I go first? My husband is waiting for his breakfast."

Toby Competitions

No. 132—Keats Did It

COMPETITORS are asked to provide the opening stanza of an Ode to Autumn. Limit 12 lines.

A framed *Punch* original, to be selected from all available drawings, is offered for the best entry. Runners-up receive a one-guinea book token. Entries by first post on Wednesday, September 28. Address to TOBY COMPETITION NO. 132, *Punch*, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.

Report on Competition No. 129

(This winter I'm going to . . .)

Frankly, a disappointment. Suggestions for original cultural or entertaining plays for the long winter evenings were uninspired. Few entries were worth quoting in full; extracts follow, starting with the winner—

ROGER TILL

14 WESTERN HILL
DURHAM

- (1) Learn wastepaper-basketry.
- (2) Reduce the waistline by reading an Anglo-Saxon riddle twice daily while touching my toes.
- (3) Improve my knowledge of foreign languages and literature by annotating the annotations made by the last five annotators on *The Waste Land*.

Book tokens for these:

- (1) Compile a dictionary of one-syllable words suitable for the recipients of modern education.
- (2) Turn newspaper leading articles into blank verse.
- (3) Build a sound-proof refuge in the house to provide respite from radio, television, record-players, guitars and/or neighbours.

J. P. Pinel, 67 Horn Park Lane, Lee, London, S.E.12

Research for and write *Primitive Folk-Art in Urban Areas*, a study of pencilled

and inscribed writings on walls of public buildings, slogans on sides of houses, etc.
E. O. Parrott, 47 Daver Court, Chelsea Manor Street, London, S.W.3

Re-read *Das Kapital* by K. Marx, high diving lessons, translate Hobbes' *Leviathan* into Latin iambics, correspondence course on deep breathing.

C. J. Crawford, 22 Talbot Road, London, W.2

Practice physical disembodiment; will come in useful when nuclear warfare starts.

L. F. Goldsmid, "Carranya," Bembridge, Isle of Wight

Form a group of four to experiment in Dunne's Serialism, backwards and forwards, and turn the results to practical advantage. Backwards, by intervals, to the dawn of *homo sapiens*: credible results to be published. Forwards, to proximate dates, for investment in pools, racing and stocks.

J. R. H. Hall, "Tigh-an-Truain," Port Ellen, Isle of Islay, Argyll

Last winter too many people were learning Russian, so that its status value has dropped. This winter I'm going to learn Chinese to keep one step ahead.

Mrs. Peggy Wheeler, 49 Limecraigs, Campbeltown, Argyll



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